

NINTENDO GAMECUBE • DS • GBA
NGC
MARIO KART DS
ISSUE #114
CHRISTMAS 2005 / £3.99
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THE GUIDE TO POKÉMON XD
REVIEWED!
MARIO KART DS
In pole position for DS game of the year!
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Our funniest festive feature ever!
RATED!
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Need For Speed: Most Wanted
007: From Russia With Love
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Your monthly guide to retro Nintendo gaming

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INDEPENDENT NINTENDO GAMING

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START YOUR ENGINES



When we haven't been busy trying to fit as many Zelda Encyclopaedia's into our mouths as possible (no really, for your information, Paul won that game, with an astonishing *nine*) there's been only one thing on our minds - and that's *Mario Kart*.

It's a thing of beauty, it truly is, everything you have the god-given right to expect, and much, *much* more. Including the chance to indulge in the time honoured tradition of 'Yoshi Bashing'. Oh, and apparently it's got something to do with 'internets' or something, so you can all Wiffy to your hearts content? No, that's not right, whatever, there's some important stuff written about that over a few pages to your right.

Anything else? Ah, yes MERRY CHRISTMAS! Even though we're writing (and you're probably reading) this in November, we're celebrating in the only way we know how – by writing smutty stories about all your Nintendo favourites, and delivering a very healthy sack-load of reviews - none of which happen to be *Mario Party*, so you're all safe for another month yet…

TURN OVER THE PAGE!
It's the one you've all been waiting for! Mario Kart. Online. And reviewed. All on page 24.





SUBSCRIBE TODAY!
Go to page 71 to see how you can get **NGC** delivered direct to your door, before it hits the news stands.

WHY WE'RE No.1 FOR NINTENDO

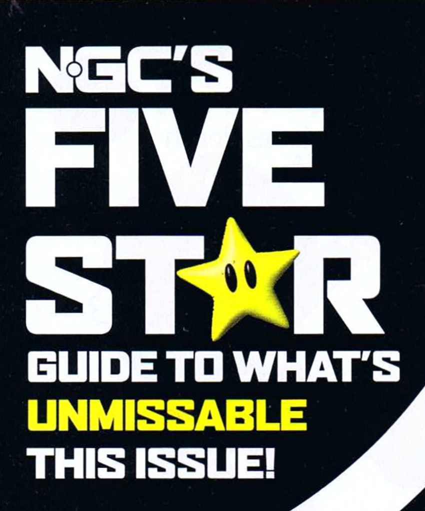
NGC's the result of over a decade of gaming genius – so you're the best-informed Nintendo gamer around.



■ First there was the SNES, and Super Play came out alongside it – fanboys rejoiced.

■ A new machine meant a new magazine – but one with the same high standards.

■ Now we've got Gamecube, and you've got **NGC**. That's 13 years of Ninty love right there.



GUIDE TO WHAT'S UNMISSABLE THIS ISSUE!



MARIO KART DS

WHEELY, WHEELY GOOD FUN

More eagerly awaited than Pamela Anderson's return to professional trampolining, it's finally here on the DS.



2

PAGE 60

FIRE EMBLEM

STRATEGY FANTASY RPG

Shades of *Advance Wars* meet classic Japanese fantasy in this turn-based battler. Turn immediatley to page 60 to see what all the fuss is about. Hurry!

MARIO KART® DS

Join Mario, Peach and friends for a lap of honour...

PAGE 24



CHRISTMAS
FA-LA-LA-LA-LAAAH!
A snow-dusted cavalcade of gift ideas, festive stories and seasonal whimsy. Come along, and bring Tiny Tim.

POKÉMON XD GUIDE
HOWTA FIND 'EM ALL
A full guide to tracking down all the game's Shadow Pokémon.



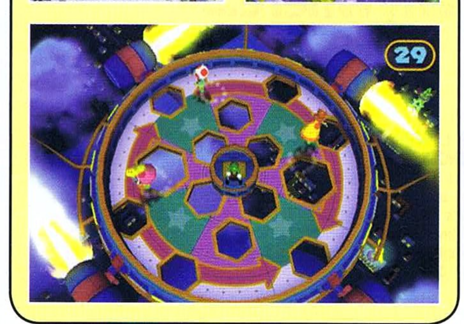
WHAT'S IN NGC?
Just the facts, ma'am... just the facts.

PREVIEWS
The almost-but-not-quite-here games guide.







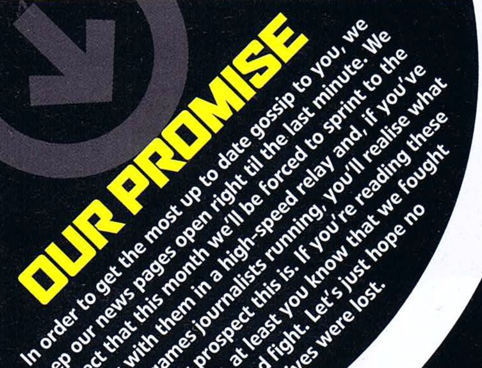


NEWS
The latest rumours, truths and goings-on.

OTHER STUFF
Things like... bits and bobs, in general.



REVIEWS
Still not sure what you want for Chrimbo?



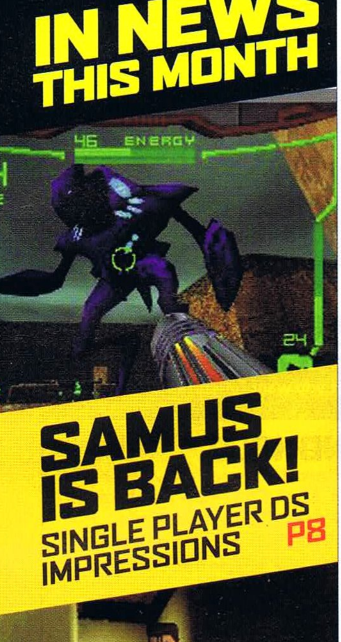
OUR PROMISE

In order to get the most up to date gossip to you, we keep our news pages open right til the last minute. We suspect that this month we'll be forced to sprint to the printers with them in a high-speed relay and, if you've ever seen games journalists running, you'll realise what a terrifying prospect this is. If you're reading these words now, at least you know that we fought the good fight. Let's just hope no lives were lost.

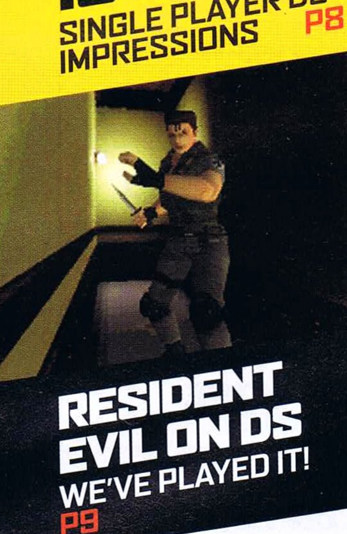
NGC BRINGING YOU NEWS FIRST

NEWSDESK

IN NEWS THIS MONTH



SAMUS IS BACK!
SINGLE PLAYER DS IMPRESSIONS P8



RESIDENT EVIL ON DS
WE'VE PLAYED IT! P9



PLUS!
THE LATEST REVOLUTION RUMOURS! P10
AND MORE...

ALL AROUND THE WORLD

Play anyone, anytime, anywhere...





THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: TWILIGHT PRINCESS (GC)
Still no confirmed release date for this one, but it'll be worth waiting for – it looks like it could be the best game on GC. You know – like – THE best game… ever. Are you excited? You should be. You will be.
Out: 2006

VS THE WORLD

Earlier this month we had the chance to test out the Wi-Fi service for ourselves during Nintendo's 'Gamer Summit' at their NoE headquarters in Germany. Handing out DS to attendees, we got the chance to race against Nintendo staff in both the US and Canada as well as Mario Kart's director, Hideo Konno – and no, we didn't beat him. He designed the game.

There are various different ways of finding opponents. You can race friends, by entering their 12-digit 'Friend Code'. Race internationally, against people in your own region as well as any recent opponents or 'Rivals' – players with the same skill level as you. Once you've chosen, the DS automatically finds opponents for you – a process that takes under a minute, and will be even faster with more users online.

Nintendo have not included any form of chat into the game, the primary reason being to stop any unsavoury comment – or worse – passing between gamers, and to help the experience be safe, and inoffensive as possible. Which, in our book, is a good thing.





It's here, and most importantly, it *works*. Just days after you read this, Nintendo's hugely anticipated Wi-Fi network will be up and running to coincide with the launch of the excellent *Mario Kart: DS* (you can find out just how excellent it is by heading over to page 24).

So how's it all going to work? Well, the most important thing is that it's free, with no connection charges or subscription fees other than your current broadband charges, and requires a minimal amount of fuss for all concerned. If you have Wi-Fi already in your house then great, if not, Nintendo will be releasing a special USB dongle (for around £30) that you can attach to a broadband-connected PC. And if that's not enough for you, Nintendo's recent partnerships with BT Openzone and The Cloud will still make Wi-Fi gaming accessible outside the home.

Over 7,500 Wi-Fi hotspots will be available across the UK. First Great Western Railway stations, Hilton and Ramada Hotels, Football Stadiums, Student Unions, BT Payphones, Airports and even games retailers will allow access to the network. If you want to know where your nearest hotspots are, head over to **thecloud.com** or **btopenzone.com** and enter your postcode. Even better, the number of Wi-Fi hotspots will grow as the months go by – hopefully making Wi-Fi gaming accessible to as many people as possible, regardless of whether they have broadband at home.

It's the whole ease of the system which is so impressive (check the box above) and it's credit to Nintendo that they've managed to make it so accessible to everyone. They've often talked about only entering the online arena when the time was right, with the right games and at a time when the most people could get enjoyment out of it, and they've delivered. And with the likes of *Animal Crossing* and *Metroid* on the horizon, the outlook is rosy.

"THE EASE OF THE SYSTEM MAKES IT SO IMPRESSIVE. IT'S A CREDIT TO NINTENDO..."

ANIMAL CROSSING DS
It's one of those games, like Pokemon, that has been crying out fonr some kind of online play. Meet up with your friends, exchange goodies and chop down their trees! Magic.
Out: spring 2006



METROID PRIME HUNTERS (DS)
We've finally played the single player, and what a beauty it was. There's a run down on our impressions over the page. You won't be disappointed.
Out: Early 2006

NOW PLAYING

TOM E
TRAUMA CENTER
Atlus
NGC/114 5/5



Easily my favourite DS game so far. I can't put it down. I can't stop myself from 'just having a look' at the next episode and before I know it, I've done no work. Whatsoever. Frighteningly addictive stuff.

MARTIN
MARIO KART
Nintendo
NGC/114 5/5



It's quite good. It's got good graphics. Good sound and good playability. If you like Mario Kart – you'll love this. I'm just off to have another go... Goodability rating? Off the scale, folks. Off the scale.

GERAINT
FIRE EMBLEM: PATH OF RADIANCE
Nintendo



NGC/114 91%
Maybe it's just me, but I like nothing better than waking up on a rainy Sunday morning, making a nice hot cup of coffee and settling down for a whopping stat-based epic. Heaven.

PAUL
SUPER PRINCESS PEACH
Nintendo
NGC/114 4/5



Because this is my last ever issue of NGC, there's no need for me to keep up this pretence of being a macho surfer dude. I've been living a lie, pretending I like car games when in truth I prefer things that are very pink and have a low difficulty level. This is the Best Game Ever.

GREENER
PHOENIX WRIGHT: ACE ATTORNEY
Capcom
NGC/114 5/5



TAKE THAT! There's nothing more satisfying than submitting a piece of evidence, the music goes all upbeat and the woman, who was previously communicating via the ancient art of breast spasms, bursts into tears.

GOLDEN JOYSTICK AWARDS

Nintendo and Capcom get what they deserve…



David Yarnton, one of NoE's big-wigs accepting Nintendo's award for Best

AND THE WINNERS ARE…

Nintendo came out of this years Golden Joysticks having fared pretty well, picking up the award for Best Publisher. Elsewhere, *Mario 64 DS* won best handheld game of the year, while there was a pretty strong showing for *Resi 4*, earning itself awards for Gamecube game of the year and the Editor's Game of the year .

There were however a couple of, cough, dodgy results. *Resi 4* picked up an extra award for Best Film-Based Game Of The Year, presumably because it was based on that film… you know… the one that doesn't actually exist. Round of applause for everyone who voted for it. We also loved the fact that *Twilight Princess* won the One To Watch For Xmas award too – a game that we'll all be rushing out to buy, er… next year. And the least said about PSP winning the Innovation Of The Year award the better…



It's out very own Tom handing out the award for Capcom's superb *Resident Evil 4*.



In the version we played you couldn't charge your arm cannon.



You can use the touch screen to swap your weapons quickly.



METROID PRIME HUNTERS

At long last, hands on with the single player.

Of all the new DS games we played this month, *Hunters* certainly shone the brightest. It's absolutely gorgeous to look at, make no mistake, with incredible eye-popping cutscenes spread over both screens, highly detailed environments and a smooth-as-butter framerate to match.

The section we played came from the 'PAX Demo' (a version recently shown at Penny Arcade's own expo) and consisted of, what we assume to be, the opening level (or should that be mission) of the game. It basically revolved around a linear trek through a station (that looks similar to that single player area in your *First Hunt* demo) looking for artefacts which activate a teleporter at the end of the level.

Once again, you have a scan visor that you can use to access terminals and identify enemies and items, which you access by tapping a little circle at the bottom of the touch screen and holding down the fire button while aiming at the highlighted area. You'll be pleased to hear that this process is much faster than before.

As you already know, the touch screen is of great importance to *Hunters*. Not only does it allow you to select weapons (cannon/missiles in the demo we played) and your morph ball, but it also acts like a mouse for stylus-controlled aiming. It's very sensitive and very accurate for aiming, although we have to say our index fingers got very tired by the end of the demo, because you're firing with it as well as supporting the DS unit itself. The alternative control method lets you use the D-pad and face buttons for movement and aiming. It's a more comfortable set-up, sure, but it's no where near as accurate as we'd like – resting the DS on a table and using the stylus to aim is the best way of playing.

Apart from this one little niggle though, we have to say *Hunters* looks very impressive indeed and the single player (although we suspect it will be a mission based affair as opposed to an open, exploration based game) looks set to retain all the high standards of presentation and incredible atmosphere that you've come to expect from *Prime*…

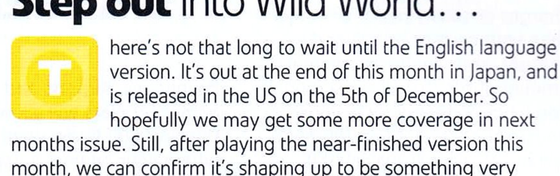
ANIMAL CROSSING



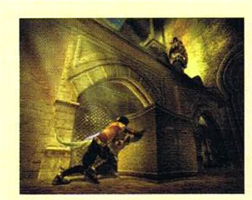
Just think, in a few months, you'll be able to converse and trade with real people.

Step out into Wild World…

There's not that long to wait until the English language version. It's out at the end of this month in Japan, and is released in the US on the 5th of December. So hopefully we may get some more coverage in next months issue. Still, after playing the near-finished version this month, we can confirm it's shaping up to be something very special. The new 3D rolling log engine does the game power of good in the visual department (even though the framerate wasn't exactly super-smooth) and the fact that real humans will now visit your town online via the magic of Wi-Fi, will help inject the game with that little extra magic.



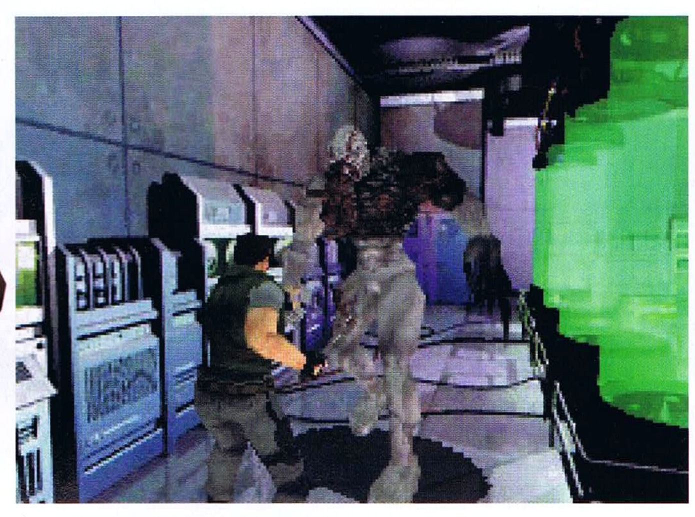




PRINCE OF PERSIA: TWO THRONES (GC)
A welcome return to the more sandy (and less rocky) atmosphere of the original game. This time with added 'Dark Prince' to spice things up a bit.
Out: December 9



MARIO AND LUIGI: PARTNERS IN TIME (DS)
If the last game was anything to go by, this will be the funniest thing on DS. Platforming action, puzzling and RPG-ing – this is gonna rock your eyebrows off.
Out: January 27



△ We feel pretty down on *Resi DS*, but it's still very early days yet. Capcom have really been on form this generation, so anything can happen.

RESIDENT EVIL DEADLY SILENCE

Evil in more ways than one…

We can't say we're exactly impressed – although admittedly we didn't get as much time with it as we'd have liked. Regardless, initial impressions are, well, pretty poor to be honest.

First up is Classic mode, a direct port of the original Playstation game, complete with appalling FMV intro. The acting was diabolical way-back-when, and seeing it again almost a decade on is like your mum digging up video footage of you smearing jam over your naked body when you were only five years old and then showing it to your mates. It's frighteningly embarrassing. It's even accurate down to the bloody long winded door-opening animations.

To make matters worse, after being spoiled by the superb *Resi 4*, having to go back to fixed camera angles and rotational controls on a screen the size of a credit card feels like a kick in the teeth.

Rebirth didn't exactly fill us with joy either. The inclusion of first-person, 3D stylus/knife jabbing challenges, while not so bad in themselves, feel like they've been tossed in at random, and are at complete odds with the game in its current state. The only consolation comes from the fact that this was very early code indeed, and we didn't get the chance to try any of the new, touch screen puzzles and tasks or the co-op and competitive battle modes. Until we get a hands on with near-complete code then, it's probably best to reserve judgement.



△ That classic scene where Jill finds a mate and then eats it. Or not.



△ Familiar scenes like this will be mixed with new, DS specific content.



CHIBI ROBO (GC)
Yeah, we've reviewed this already (we gave it 90 back in NGC/110), but at least we have confirmation that it'll be making its way out over here. Also some changes to the interface have been made, so hopefully it should be even better than the brilliant Japanese version.
Out: Spring 2006

NINTENDO DIFFERENCE?

Something special straight from Kyoto



△ *This screen appears less than 10 seconds after turning on the*

NO. 5 NOW LOADING

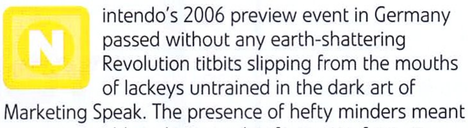
This isn't so much a gameplay difference as a matter of common sense, because loading screens are the scourge of gaming. They're completely unnecessary and absolutely unforgivable. When you pop a disc in your Gamecube for a quick session, nothing drains the enthusiasm more thoroughly than screen after screen of copyright messages. Stick that crap in the credits, so we never have to look at it. We couldn't give a monkeys who developed this game or what type of middleware it runs on, and if anyone can honestly say they find that sort of guff exciting, well, you really ought to get out more.

It's the gaming equivalent of being forced to watch adverts for products you can't buy. So my new game has THX sound? Brilliant! If they keep letting me know this every time I load it up, maybe one day I'll be arsed to find out what it actually means.

When Gamecube swapped cartridges for discs, we were apprehensive – would Mario now come with a fistful of corporate logos and a two-minute progress bar? But when we first fired up Luigi's Mansion, the title screen appeared within 10 seconds, we were into the game in less than 20, and our fears vanished faster than you can say 'challenge everything'.



REVOLUTION RUMOURS



It's all true! Honest. We travelled to Germany for this.

Nintendo's 2006 preview event in Germany passed without any earth-shattering Revolution titbits slipping from the mouths of lackeys untrained in the dark art of Marketing Speak. The presence of hefty minders meant we were unable to beat much information from any unsuspecting Nintendo underlings, although we did learn a few new things.

First up, there's the suggestion that we'll be able to play certain online multiplayer titles using just one copy of the game. Much like the DS, which supports stripped-down multiplayer 'game sharing', Revolution will give players the chance to try before they buy. We also learned that game trailers and playable demos will be made available for downloading.

Secondly, we had the chance to chat about Revolution's 'virtual console' feature, which will allow you to play games from any of Nintendo's previous machines bar the Game Boy and Virtual Boy. Apparently Revolution will be capable of running games from different regions, so if Nintendo permits it, PAL gamers will be able to get hold of the faster NTSC versions of games like *Super Mario Kart*. Unless they're specially upgraded for Revolution, SNES and NES titles will look exactly the same as they do on their native consoles. N64 titles will run at a smoother framerate.

There's still no news about games or the launch date, although the previously mooted simultaneous worldwide release is looking less likely. Also, despite rumours of Shigsy showing off a new *Mario* on Revolution in December (100% untrue, say Nintendo), definite details probably won't emerge until new year.

FIFA STREET 2

Rooney and the gang play on solid, knee-tearing concrete



The original *FIFA Street* wasn't quite as special as we had initially hoped, copping a respectable (but not amazing) 71% back in our April edition. As is customary, EA will be releasing the sequel one year from that date, and we're hoping for something a little more polished.

Early details suggest the new game will have 'more killer moves' than its predecessor, including a 'trick stick beat system', and one of the venues will be London's 'famous' Westway – a gigantic concrete flyover with sports centres and glue-sniffing tramps underneath.



△ **Under the concrete flyover.**





METROID PRIME HUNTERS (DS)
Every DS owner will have played this, and they will tell you just how good it's going to be. To top it off, the graphics are some of the best the DS has seen.
Out: TBC 2006



BATTALION WARS (GC)
Originally starting life as an incarnation of *Advance Wars*, *Battalion Wars* has evolved beyond that. Although we weren't impressed with it at first, it's starting to look very promising indeed.
Out: Dec 9

CURIOUS GEORGE

Monkey see, monkey destroy



We'll happily admit to being unaware of Curious George, simian star of a series of toddlers' books that, we're told, have shifted 27 million copies over the past 65 years. But we're pretty damned excited that next year's Curious George movie, which may or may not help promote the furry hero among British pre-schoolers, features Dick Van Dyke – owner of the world's most preposterous Cockney accent in Mary Poppins. We assumed he was dead!

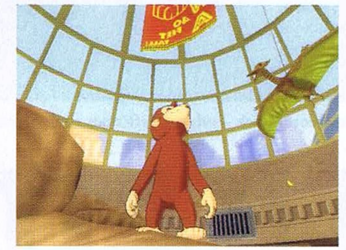
Anyway, Namco will be supplying the inevitable platform adventure to accompany the film. It's already looking very slick, with excellent cel-shaded animation and an innovative first-person camera for crawling through narrow gaps, showing George's hands slapping monkey-style against the floor.

Because George's 'thing' is causing mischief, you can poke and prod various items to trigger amusing animations – drawers spill their contents, bins get upended and widespread mess is created. Unfortunately the stuff all disappears after it hits the floor, but you do get to go on a more permanently destructive mission to rob a museum of valuable antiquities.

Curious George for GBA and Gamecube will be released at the same time as the movie, which is around February in the United States and probably Easter-ish over here. Start saving!



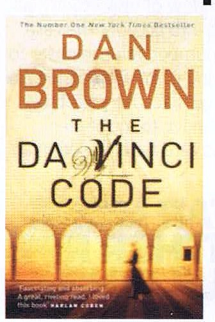
△ Poke things with Goerge's curious finger, and watch mayhem fly out.



△ George robs a museum in this game (at least, we think he does).

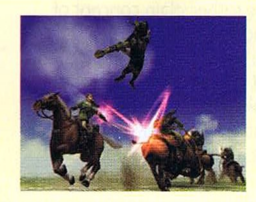
THE DA VINCI CODE

From conspiracy to Gamecube





Almost unbelievably, Dan Brown's potboiler, which lifted most of its intriguing plot details from a 1980s conspiracy theory, has become the *biggest selling novel of all time*. Less surprising is the fact that it's being made into a movie, with an accompanying game, too. A game that may well turn out to be a little better than the average film tie-in, since they've roped in the designer of the excellent *Broken Sword*. So we have a pretty good idea of what to expect from this, but in the absence of any specific details all we know is that it's due in May – delays and other conspiracies permitting.



THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: TWILIGHT PRINCESS (GC)
Still no confirmed release date for this one, but it'll be worth waiting for – it looks like it could be the best game on GC. You know – like – THE best game ever. Are you excited? You should be. You will be.
Out: TBC 2006

DON'T BE AFRAID
Yeah, we know it's a card based battle system and we know that some of you don't want to even want to entertain the thought of giving it a go, but trust us, this one is actually pretty good. Honestly!



△ Hopefully, the photographing system will make a comeback – where getting a snap of various enemies would earn you cash.

BATEN KAITOS 2

Namco deliver a sequel (or should that be prequel) to their obscure, but beautiful card-based RPG…



THE KNOWLEDGE

- **Play as a guiding sprit to Sagi, a young man on a quest to stop a mysterious force.**
- **Takes place 20 year prior to the event of Baten Kaitos.**
- **Unique, elaborate and fast-paced card-battling system.**

FACTFILE

Who's making it?
Namco

What have they done before?
Tales of Symphonia (NGC/100, 84%)
Epic cel-shaded RPG, with likeable characters and an excellent battle system.

Hands up who played the first one then, hmmm? Anyone? Oh yes, you three at the back. Well done. As for the rest of you, well, we can't really blame you for not rushing to the shops on the day of its release – *Baten Kaitos* wasn't exactly wheeled out with much of a fanfare, which, frankly is a something of a shame considering it's easily one of the Gamecube's better RPGs. Even if it is a little, well, odd.

On the surface it's a fairly traditional RPG. A vast, sweeping epic played out on pre-rendered backdrops. You have the obligatory towns in which to purchase items, meet characters and further plot development – and between these you have the game's paths and dungeons – areas where you fight for XP, solve simple puzzles and do battle with bosses. That's where the similarities end though.

Take the fighting system as an example. *Baten Kaitos* is a card battler at heart, but where the likes of *Pokémon Trading Card Game* and *Magic The Gathering* are quite slow, turn-based affairs, *Kaitos* manages to add a free-flowing, more action-orientated twist to the proceedings. You see, cards (called Magnus) are a metaphor for every item in the game. Food, weapons, armour, elements, magic, etc, can have their essence trapped into a card. These cards can then be organised into decks which you then call out in the course of a battle to attack, defend, heal, cast and so on. Where it gets clever is in the way you deploy them. You see, each turn for a character has a strict time limit. You have to look at the cards in your current hand, and submit them into play within a very small window of opportunity, all the while taking into account the card type and their number value in order to create devastating combos and unleash the most damage. Because your brain and your hands have to move so quickly, it makes card battling seem far more exciting than in any other RPG based on the rather plain concept of deck-building.

> **"THE CARD BATTLING IS FAR MORE EXCITING THAN IN ANY OTHER RPG BASED AROUND DECK BUILDING"**

The same system will be in place this time around too, and strangely, the game will take place on many of the same continents. You can still expect all new regions, of course, but expect



△ Once you're done chatting, chances are those robots will try and mess you up real nice.

△ A Ninja. In a kitchen.

△ You really can't argue with the level of artistry that's gone into each and every location.



△ Exploration can yield new cards.



△ We love the regal settings.



△ Diplomacy between continents is important to the story, with some regions more welcoming to your party – and its cause – than others.

ネロ
彼はこころの翼や精霊といった
ものを嫌っている。
この世から根絶にしたいほどにな。

△ Certain scenes in the original were voiced by the most wooden-sounding actors imaginable.

LIKE CHEESE

One interesting aspect of *Kaitos* is the way that the essence of trapped Magnus age over time – often turning into different items, which, when combined with other Magnus, could often yield powerful results on the battlefield. Hopefully, this aspect of the game will be expanded but, ideally, with some indication as to the speed at which things mature this time.

those familiar sights and cites to be given a rather drastic makeover – primarily because *Kaitos 2* takes place 20 years in the past. In a rather nice touch, you can also expect to see some familiar faces – younger versions of Sylvana, Geldoblame and paddle-wielding meathead Gibari have all been confirmed thus far, and will help give a better sense of continuity to the world.

Pleasingly, one thing has been kept *exactly* the same and that's the astonishingly quality of the pre-rendered artwork. If you played the original you'll know what we mean – each and every scene, every city, field, jungle vista is beautifully animated, with swirling clouds, gently swaying branches and the like, and everything is ludicrously rich in detailed. This aspect was perhaps the originals biggest asset, with each new area offering something wildly different from the next, but the view was never short of breathtaking.

It's also nice to see the almost-regal atmosphere and setting continue, with similarly styled portraits to help flesh out the 3D character models a bit. The original would have been a little faceless had they not been included, as you never really feel particularly close to the action happening on screen.

If we had to make some general improvements though, we'd like some stronger side-quests this time around. In the last game, these falt a little tacked on, and amounted to little more that collecting quests – like the constellation stones for the cathedral, and having to find all of the old mans relatives. Not particularly inspired. We hope for better next time.







The original was a very solid RPG that offered something just a little different. There were some problems last time though – just niggling presentational things, like the way characters seemed to kind of skate over the environments, and the fact that you had to turn off the voice acting the second anyone spoke. Here's hoping they don't make the same mistakes again.

ANTICIPATION RATING







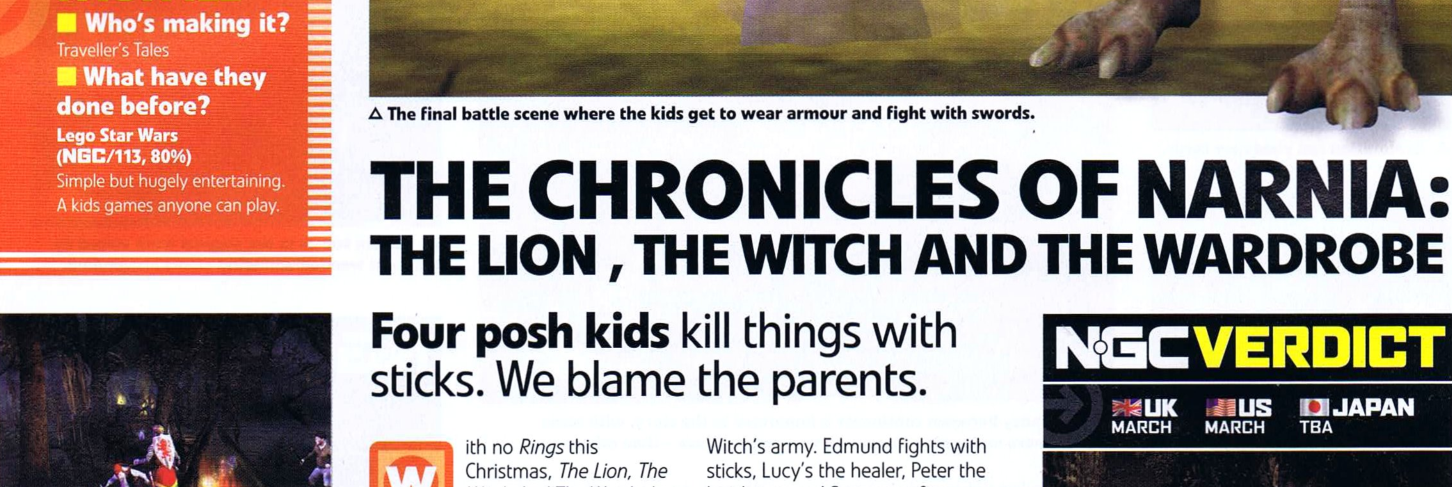
THE KNOWLEDGE

- Play as any of the four kids.
- 15 levels of 2-player co-op.
- Fight the White Witch's army.
- Unlock exclusive secret stuff from the movie.

FACTFILE

Who's making it?
Traveller's Tales

What have they done before?
Lego Star Wars (NGC/113, 80%)
Simple but hugely entertaining. A kids games anyone can play.



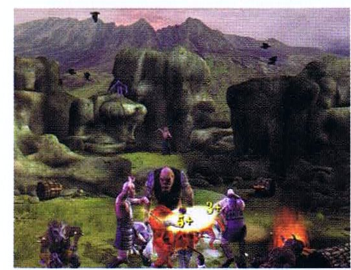
△ The final battle scene where the kids get to wear armour and fight with swords.

THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA: THE LION , THE WITCH AND THE WARDROBE

Four posh kids kill things with sticks. We blame the parents.



△ It's kicking off in Narnia. No worries, the kid with the stick will sort it out.

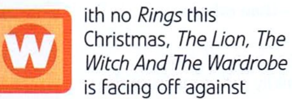


△ Narnia residents became increasingly concerned with their new neighbours.

With no *Rings* this Christmas, *The Lion, The Witch And The Wardrobe* is facing off against *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* to be the most magical blockbuster this Christmas. But, while you can already play *Narnia* on DS (see review on page 38), you're going to have to wait until March to play as the fantastic four on Gamecube. We mean the four posh Pevensies of course – Peter, Susan, Edmund and Lucy – who must fight centaurs, werewolves and more.

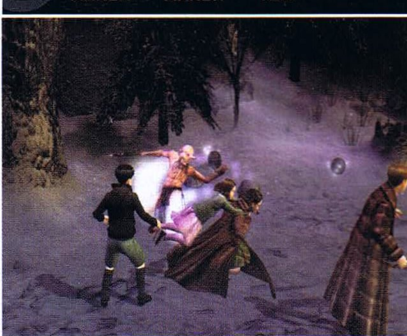
At its heart, *Narnia* is a hack 'n' slasher where you must use the kids' individual skills to defeat the Witch's army. Edmund fights with sticks, Lucy's the healer, Peter the hard man and Susan can fire arrows at flying enemies. So when scrapping an ogre you can make one kid daze him then get another to jump on his back and cover his eyes to leave him open to attack. That all sounds fine, but breaking ice blocks by throwing Lucy at them's a bit odd, but not as mad as when Peter flails Edmund around his head to defeat a dwarf.

In addition to the hacking and slashing, there are also platformy bits where the siblings avoid spikes and pits, collect coins and skirt round Narnia's slippy ice.



> "AT ITS HEART, NARNIA IS A HACK 'N' SLASHER THAT USES THE KIDS' UNIQUE SKILLS"





Like *Lord of the Rings*, there's a lot of hack and slash killing going on here but although Traveller's Tales tell us this isn't a kids game, it won't be as violent as EA's *Rings* games. Still, with hundreds of on-screen enemies, it's won't be simple stuff for the young ones. Not the most exciting release then but maybe it'll surprise us.

ANTICIPATION RATING








GET ON WITH IT!
You know what we REALLY like about the single player? Sitting for five minutes while the computer characters play out there turns. It makes minutes pass like months – and to entertain ourselves while it happens, we like to jab ourselves in he forearms with hot forks.

△ Be the first to get to the middle. Thrilling stuff.

△ Three against one – blast that plumber off the platform. Pronto.

THE KNOWLEDGE

- Six all-new interactive boards.
- Allows for up to eight players.
- A whopping 86 mini-games can be unlocked by playing the main game.

FACTFILE

Who's making it?
Hudson

What have they done before?
Bomberman Generation (NGC/76, 70%)
Dull single player, but with four players it's as good as ever.





△ Run and avoid those shells.

MARIO PARTY 7

Mario's in seventh heaven. Or could it be hell



Sometime back in 1999, someone at Hudson must have broken a mirror. That can only explain seven years of bad luck. Seven years of having to churn out more mini-games.

They would have our sympathy, if it wasn't for the fact that we're the poor buggers who have to play out to be, you know, *entertaining* in some way.

Well, it's always a possibility we suppose. There's a very healthy selection of mini-games this time around – 86 to be exact – and even the boards themselves seem to be a little more interactive than before, containing plenty of cheeky pitfalls at which you can laugh at your

> **"THERE'S A VERY HEALTHY SELECTION OF MINI-GAMES THIS TIME AROUND"**

it. Another chance-based trudge across Mario-themed game boards. Another evening spent watching the computer cheat its way to those game-winning stars, and another evening hoping that this time, *this time*, the bits between the mini-games might actually turn friend's expense. Also you can draft in seven human players which will liven things up a bit for a serious bout of multi-player action.

And as for the microphone? Well, it's making a comeback again – hopefully being implemented a little better this time.

NGC VERDICT

 **UK** JAN 27  **US** NOW **JAPAN** NOW



Yes, okay, so maybe we are a little down on it – but year on year, it's done nothing but disappoint. The last one we really, truly enjoyed was *Mario Party 2* and that was almost five years ago now. Although in fairness, there a couple of decent additions here – eight players is obviously a bonus – but the microphone? Hmm.

ANTICIPATION RATING

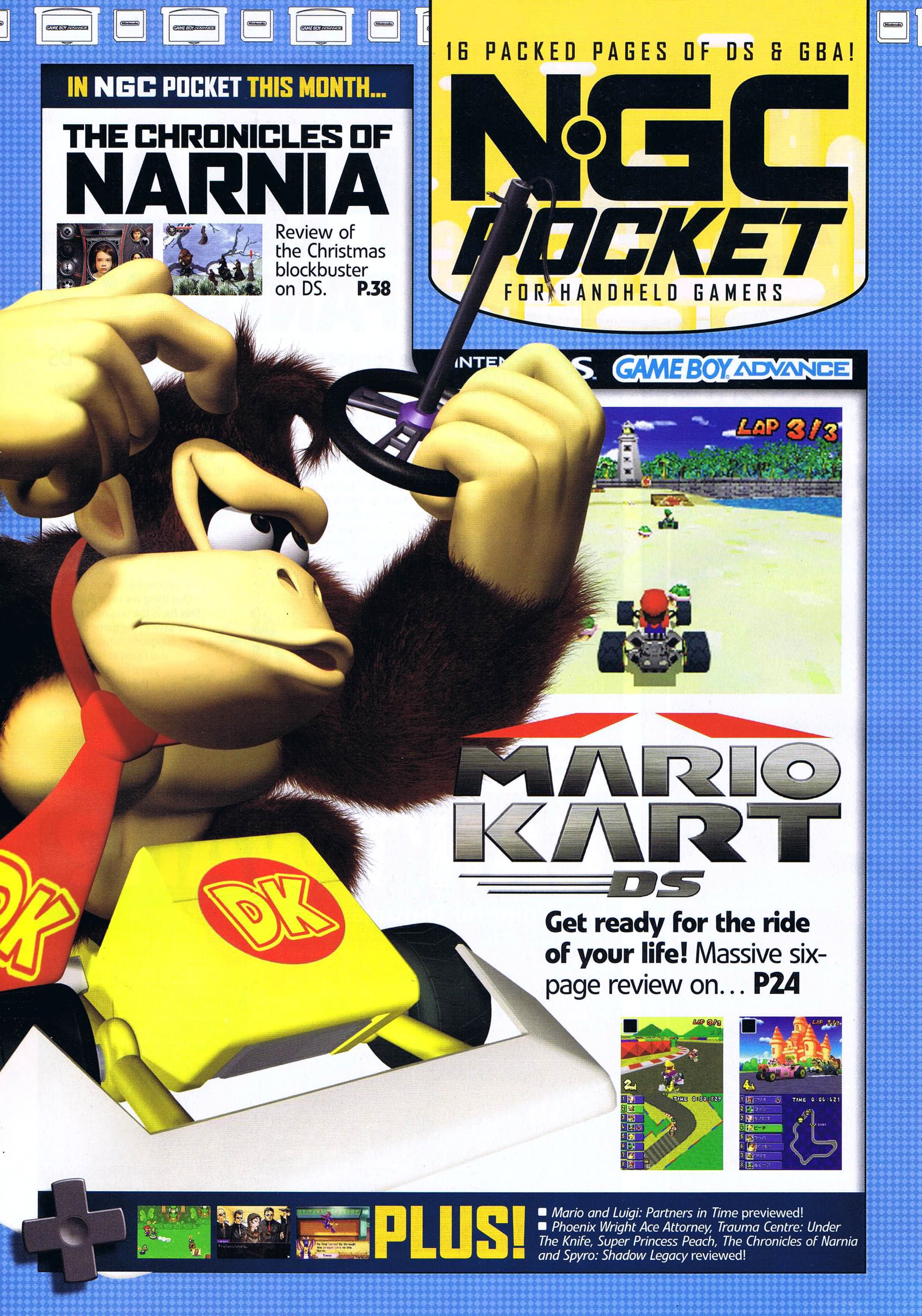
    

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NGC POCKET
FOR HANDHELD GAMERS
IN NGC POCKET THIS MONTH...
THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA
Review of the Christmas blockbuster on DS. P.38
GAME BOY ADVANCE
LAP 3/3
MARIO KART DS
Get ready for the ride of your life! Massive six-page review on... P24
PLUS!
Mario and Luigi: Partners in Time previewed!
Phoenix Wright Ace Attorney, Trauma Centre: Under The Knife, Super Princess Peach, The Chronicles of Narnia and Spyro: Shadow Legacy reviewed!
DK

FINAL FANTASY 3

The forgotten fantasy upgraded for DS

Originally released in 1990 for the NES in Japan, *Final Fantasy III* is the only *Final Fantasy* game never to get a release in the West. Some people, raving lunatics and fanboys mostly, will swear blind it's "the best *Final Fantasy* EVER!!!" before sucking the drool back up their scabby chins. While we probably wouldn't go that far, it's encouraging to see it finally get a complete graphical make-over and re-release.

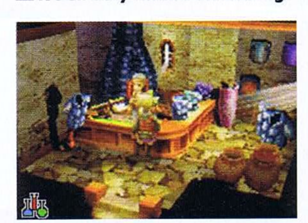
FFIII is notable for its introduction of the class system (something you're probably all familiar with since *FFV* and *Tactics*) which meant you could access new skills, equipment and action commands. The sheer range of classes meant you had greater control over how you customised your party. You could even change classes whenever you wanted to, meaning the way you played and the strategies you used could alter numerous times over the course of the adventure.

Visually, the DS version will adopt a 3D approach and look not entirely dissimilar to *Crystal Chronicles*, with a gameworld viewed from a fixed camera angle that you can zoom in and out of to get a better overall view. The game will apparently be completely playable through the use of the touch screen, which is a welcome addition.

One thing we hope Square-Enix fix, is the original's inability to save in the game's dungeons, which meant if you failed at the boss, you'd have to plough all the way through again.

It might be a good idea to clarify the story too as the original NES version was a little unfocused.

△ It's all very *Chronicles*-looking.



△ An adjustable camera indoors.



△ Dungeons will keep the same layout – but this time in 3D.

CAN'T WAIT?

Just in time for Christmas, here's another Fantasy…

Final Fantasy IV, confusingly called *Final Fantasy II* in the West (not to be confused with the second RPG in the recent *Final Fantasy I & II* collection), is being ported over to the GBA with some visual enhancements. If you're impatient for a *Fantasy* this Christmas, you'll be pleased to hear that an English language version will be released in the US on the 12th of December.











△ Square-Enix are actually planning on re-releasing and revamping all their old *Fantasy* games and, given their 8/16-bit roots, the handhelds – especially the GBA – are a prime platform to feel the love. How about *FFVI* next, eh?

WELCOME TO NGC POCKET…

All the news is about RPGs this month. Why? Because I felt like it – and I needed reassurance that *Lunar Genesis* wasn't the only thing lined up for us on the pocket role playing front. Hopefully these two pages will help raise your spirits too…

But then there's the more pressing matter of *Mario Kart* – the most content-packed *Kart* to date, with the bonus of online play. Check page 24 for Martin's six-page review.

Next up is *Trauma Centre*, a 'surgeon game' that Tom has been playing at the expense of everything else and *Phoenix Wright*, a text-heavy 'lawyer game' that's had me in stitches more often than I feel entirely comfortable with. These two games sound odd and relatively simplistic, but both are capable of exerting unnatural levels of addiction and both continue to demonstrate how the 'small and simple' approach is doing the DS's library plenty of favours. If any of you have an ounce of decency, you'll make a mental note to pick these up when they're released in the UK next year

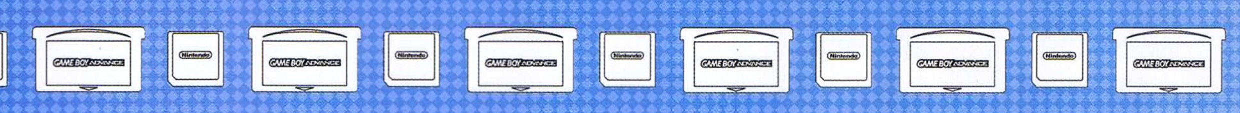
Oh and before I go, here's a simple home truth:-

Gunstar Future Heroes + GB Micro = the kind of maths that everyone can understand.

Geraint Evans, Handyman



NGC POCKET, NGC Magazine,
30 Monmouth Street, Bath, BA1 2BW
Issue 12, Christmas 2005
Editor: The Little Welshy
Contributors: Mr Surfer Man, Hello Kittsy, The Norwich Hobbit





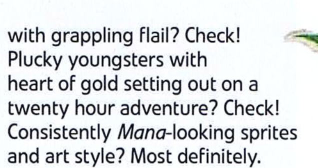
CHILDREN OF MANA

More tree-hugging, nature loving action RPG goodness…

A new *Mana* game is always cause for celebration – even if we didn't think too highly of *Sword of Mana* on GBA. Curiously, Square-Enix is passing over development duties to Next Entertainment, an outfit consisting of team members whose previous credits include (the fairly reasonable) multiplayer RPG *Shining Soul* and, oddly, *Resident Evil Code: Veronica*.

So far, everything looks reassuringly familiar. Mana Tree? Check! Multiple weapon system with grappling flail? Check! Plucky youngsters with heart of gold setting out on a twenty hour adventure? Check! Consistently *Mana*-looking sprites and art style? Most definitely.

This is all great and to be expected but what really floats our boat is the rumour that – wait for it – "more than two" human players will be able to join this hopefully hot adventure.





▲ The long held tradition of robbing peoples houses in broad daylight!



▲ That Link has a lot to answer for – Leave no pots unsmashed!

POKÉMON
MYSTERIOUS DUNGEON

The Poké stack piles up

There are going to be two versions of this new *Pokémon* game, a DS version called *Blue Rescue Force* and a GBA version called *Red Rescue Force*. It should prove a little bit unusual for a number of reasons, not least that you play as a human who's been turned into a Pokémon. A series of questions will determine which Pokémon you are, at which point you have to find a way to turn back through dungeon exploration and turn-based battles. Curious.



▲ You have to answer questions which determine which Pokémon you are. We hope to God we don't get Mr Mime.



▲ We particularly like the super-deformed artwork.

TALES OF PHANTASIA

Back to where it all began…

This is actually the first in a long line of *Tales* RPGs, so anyone who's familiar with *Symphonia* and is looking to find the series's roots will find it here. Originally a SNES game, it was remade and revamped on Playstation. The GBA version, however, sticks to its 16-bit predecessor while retaining some of the improved elements from the PS version – namely, a reduced enemy encounter rate. Expect this to arrive in Spring of next year.

NEWS WIRES

PLANKTONLINE

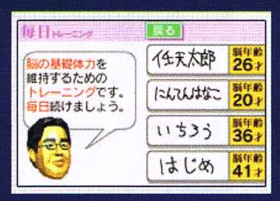
Nintendo has confirmed that the musical-art oddity, *Electroplankton* will be released in the US on January 9. Unfortunately it's only going to get a very limited release – you can only get it online on Nintendo's own site, or by visiting the World of Nintendo store in New York. Nintendo has long been talking about delivering something different for people to play, and *Electroplankton* fits that bill perfectly, so it's sad to learn about its restricted release. Yes, we can understand that it may have limited appeal but unless it gets some real exposure and people actually see it in stores, it's going to be very difficult to tempt them to try it. Here's hoping it doesn't get the same treatment over here…



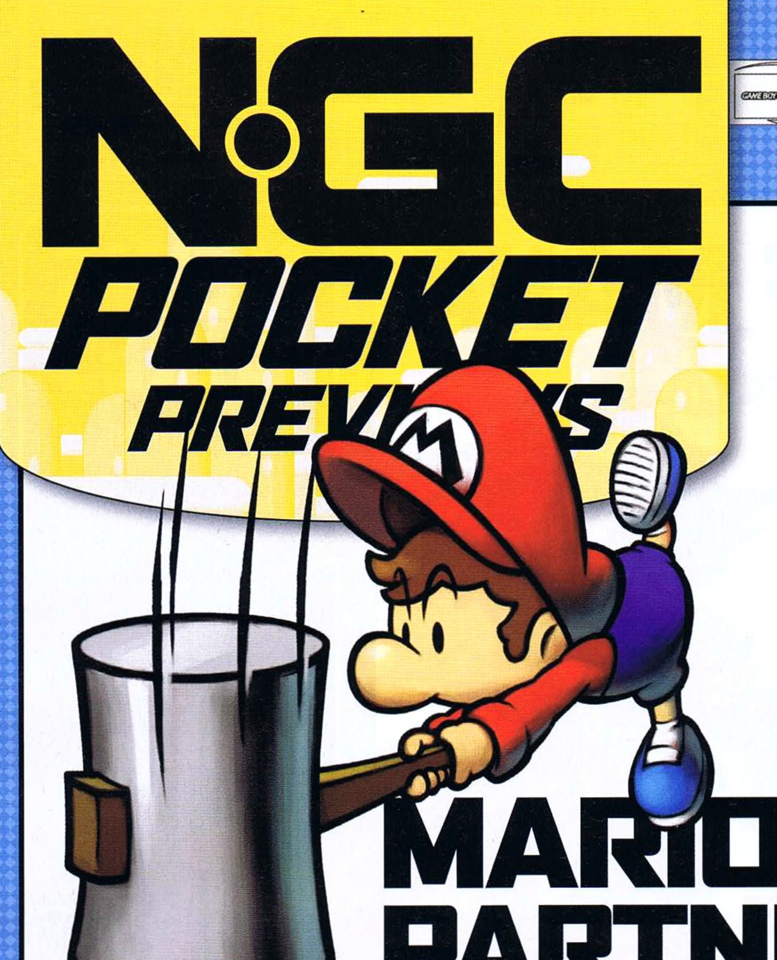
▲ It won't sell millions, but this needs more exposure in stores.

ALL IN THE WRIST

… Or should that be hand? Nintendo has recently teamed up with Zi Corporation, who are licensing their Decuma hand-writing recognition technology for use on the DS. As yet, there are no specifics about how this will be implemented. Whether it'll be used as a feature in games or whether Nintendo will look at some different kinds of applications, like non-games such as the forthcoming *Brain Training*, we don't know. At a push, we'd imagine Nintendo is looking to expand the overall functionality of the DS even further, maybe offering more PDA-like software. Or how about a more complex version of Pictochat using the WiFi service?



▲ Can we expect hand-writing driven 'non-game' oddities?



MARIO AND LUIGI PARTNERS IN TIME





△ The game's controls look set to tie your thumbs in knots.



△ Babies Mario and Luigi piggybacking on the adults.

From: NINTENDO **Out:** JAN 27

As anyone who's played the (astonishingly good) *Superstar Saga* will tell you, it's… er… 'astonishingly good'. Not just 'good' either. Funny. Downright hilarious even. Brilliantly self-aware, superbly written and arguably, the best RPG available for the GBA. So the mere mention of the DS sequel should be enough to make everyone within a ten mile radius of this page extremely moist.

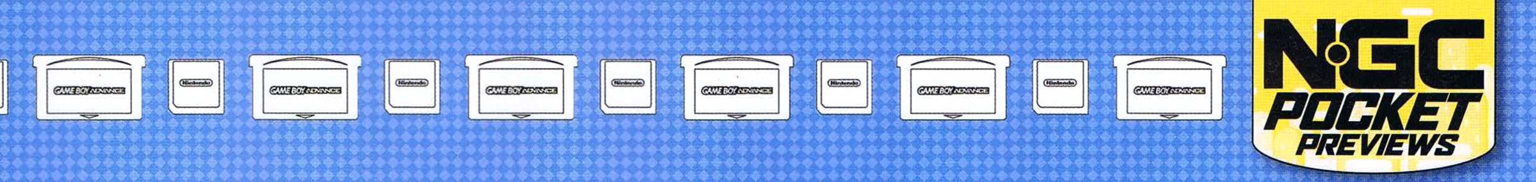
This time, Mario and Luigi have been sent back in time to retrieve the Princess from the clutches of Bowser, just for a change. While they're in the past, they bump into – then team up with – baby versions of themselves for some co-op koopa stomping action.

Visually, as these new shots show, it's strongly tied to *Saga* although expect the DS's extra grunt and features to be used to full effect. Looking beyond the obvious upgrades like character animation and background detail, there are a host of rather lovely effects – we like the transitions between battles and the effects of attacks and special items. Equally impressive is the way that both screens give different perspectives on the action. In one instance when the Mario brothers and babies are facing off against a giant Yoshi-like dino, the bottom screen shows their viewpoint while the top shows the monster scaling up a rock tower to get to them. For the majority of the time, the top screen shows a map for dungeons and the overworld, while during battle, both screens are used simultaneously. You can also expect plenty of instances where you have to control the action across two screens simultaneously when the babies and brothers go their separate ways.

In *Saga*, the two GBA face buttons controlled the actions of each brother. Similarly, the X and Y buttons now work with the babies. And if you thought some of the special skills in the GBA were finger-twistingly taxing, expect plenty more this time around. How about controlling each character independently with each button, as well as using combinations of button presses to execute attacks and special moves using multiple brother and babies in tandem…!?









This acreage of sand is good on a beach, bad when you're golfing.

TOUCH GOLF

Swing when you're winning with this hands-on golfer

From: NINTENDO **Out:** TBC

We had quite a fiddle with this during E3 and despite looking pretty ropey at the time, it still played a nice little game of golf. With a pleasing, tactile interface, even that early version was streets ahead of *Tiger Woods 2005*, its only real competition on the system.

Six months on and the visuals have markedly improved, pretty much wiping out our only criticism of the game, so we'll just rave about the lovely control scheme. The touch screen itself can be used for all manner of options, with the actual action taking place on the top screen. You can move the camera around to get a better view of the hole, use it to select clubs and even highlight the point on the ball you wish to strike. The clever bit comes from actually thwacking (we believe that's the correct technical term) the ball – you simply draw back your club by dragging the stylus down the screen, before flicking it upwards as hard or as soft as the shot requires. When you do this, you can see a line drawn through the ball, showing you how accurate your swing has been. If the line is too far to the left or right, you hook or slice the ball somewhere inconvenient, while a nice straight line through the centre means golfing perfection…







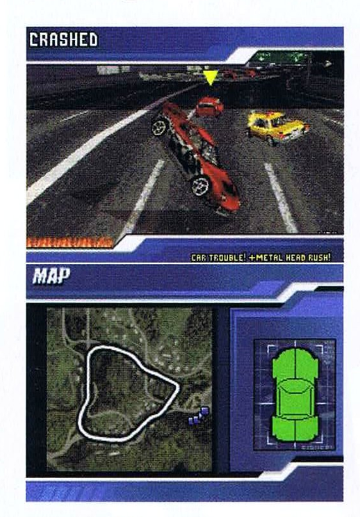




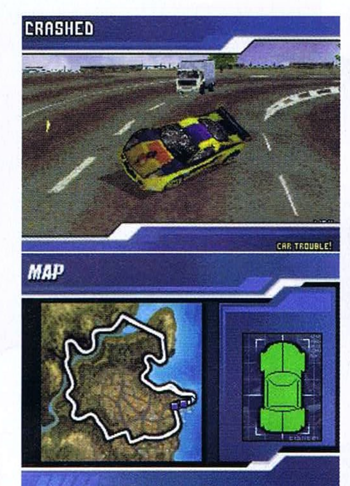


BURNOUT LEGENDS

Brakes are for wimps when prangs mean prizes…







From: EA **Out:** DEC 9

There's only one thing better than driving really, really fast. And that's driving really, really fast into things. Preferably things that have people inside them. Preferably without dying and/or getting caught by the police, being thrown into prison and forced to share cell with a man who says he likes the cut of your underpants. Where were we again…? Ah yes, driving...

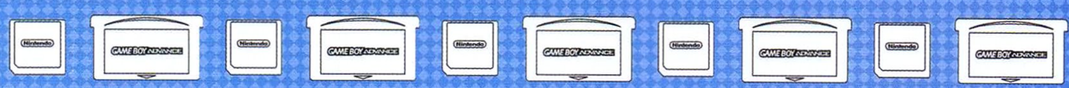
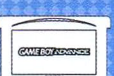
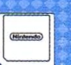
Burnout then, lets you drive fast and smash into things. Which is great. Although this incarnation on the DS might not be quite so great when you consider the other DS driving games that have gone before it. *Ashphalt* is rubbish, as is *Need for Speed*. Indeed, the only game worthy of calling itself 'passable' is *Ridge Racer* and even that's not particularly great or anything.

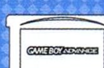
So, can *Legends* blast in a slipstream of change for DS racers? We think it might. For starters, it's pretty speedy with a solid framerate, so it at least looks the part. And the game basics remain unchanged. The more reckless your driving (near misses, driving down the wrong side of the road, etc) the more boost you get and the faster you can go. So our main worry at the moment are empty roads largely devoid of traffic to barge into.

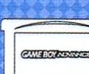
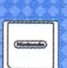
Yet every *Burnout* game there's ever been has been, at the very least, 100% 'nice', which obviously bodes well for this one. Especially when you consider the fact that the tracks are compiled from the series' previous games.

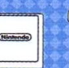


Looking good, but still in need of more traffic to smash into.








MARIO KART DS



MAP MAGIC

Touch the bottom screen to switch between a zoomed-in map for accurate rear shootage or a full map for seeing how far you're lagging behind the leaders.



BATTLE MODE

It wouldn't be Mario Kart without the balloon-bursting antics of Battle Mode. With six stages and a new Team option, the DS version is the battlingest of them all.

POPPING CANDY

This level is called Tart Top. Set on the surface of what looks like one of Peach's special creations from Mario Party, it's a pink and fluffy place for a fight. The item boxes are suspended in the air above a central tower of marzipan. If you bash into one of the decorative blobs of icing, you get a splash of cream on the screen, temporarily obscuring the view.





RANGE FINDER

The map on the bottom screen means there's little chance of anyone being able to sneak up on you. In theory. When you've got the full set of eight players going for it, you'll barely have time to glance down. Defeated players get reincarnated as ghosts. There's also a Shine Runners mode, which is a time-based elimination effort based on the Gamecube version.



FROM: NINTENDO
OUT: NOW
PLAYERS: 1-8
COST: £30
SINGLE CART LINK: YES
WI-FI: YES

Stuffing rainbow shells right up your exhaust pipe…



So there we were, power-sliding around the last corner of the last lap of the last track, right on course for the comfortable victory that would have given us our first 150cc gold trophy when, out of nowhere, we're blasted into the air by a blue shell.

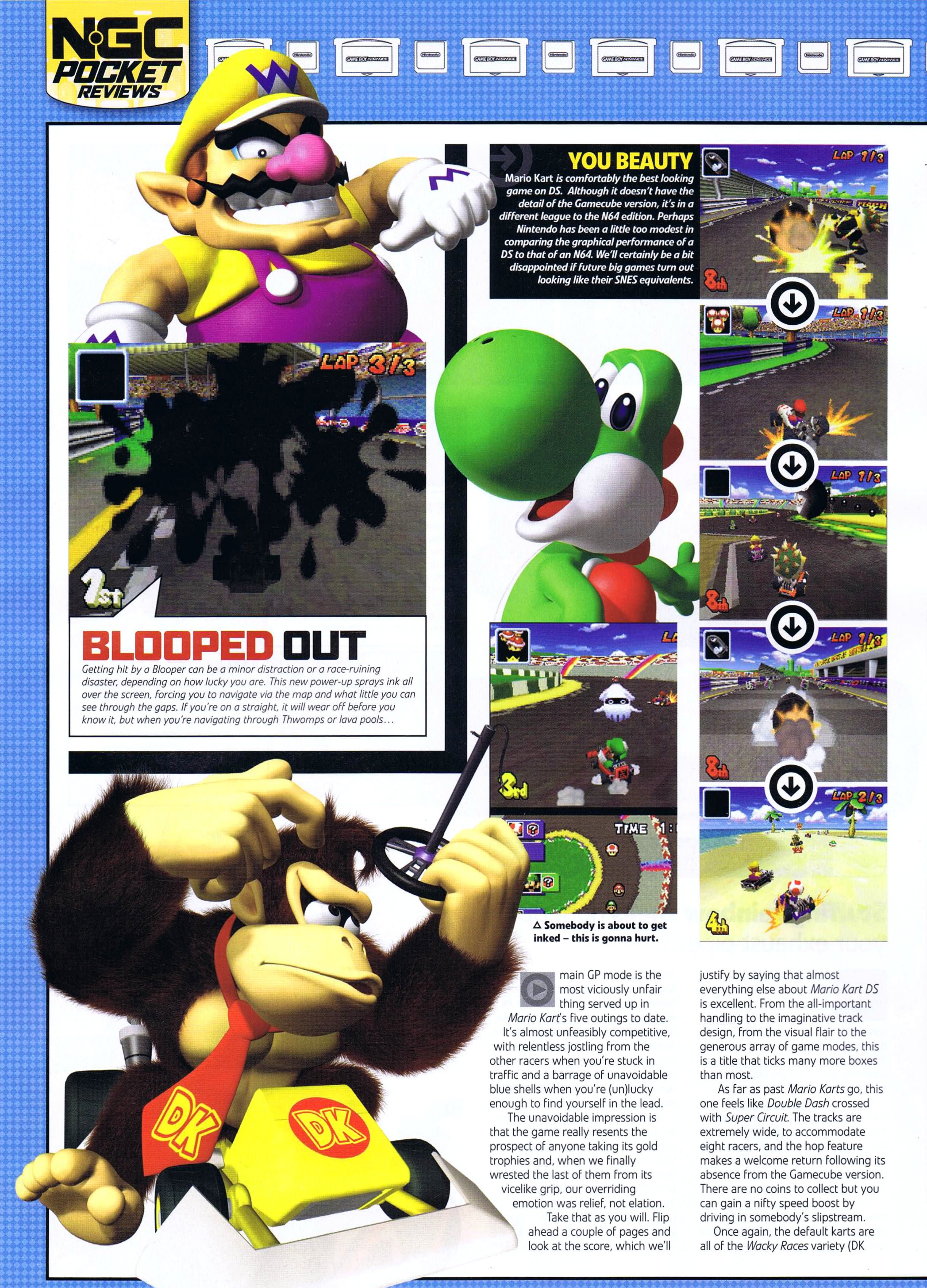
No problem. We're still so far in the lead that we can't even see a single rival on the close-range map down on the bottom screen but, no sooner has our kart landed back on the ground than we're clattered by one, two, three red shells.

There's still a chance we might make it. The finishing line is in sight and we haven't been overtaken, but a second blue soon puts paid to any lingering prospect of victory. Donkey Kong comes barrelling past, closely followed by the rest of the pack. As we hobble home for a seventh-place finish, the final act of indignity arrives in the form of a shrinky-dink lightning bolt, and a cackling Wario who rolls over our miniaturised kart and ruins our afternoon, relegating us to eighth and last. Thank you very much.

Moments like this are brown icing on the poocakes *Mario Kart DS* will expect you to eat on a regular basis. Unless you've got the stomach for another unpalatable helping, you'll be best off simply putting the game aside and taking a few minutes to rinse the putrid taste out of your mouth.

Which is to say that the





YOU BEAUTY

Mario Kart is comfortably the best looking game on DS. Although it doesn't have the detail of the Gamecube version, it's in a different league to the N64 edition. Perhaps Nintendo has been a little too modest in comparing the graphical performance of a DS to that of an N64. We'll certainly be a bit disappointed if future big games turn out looking like their SNES equivalents.

BLOOPED OUT

Getting hit by a Blooper can be a minor distraction or a race-ruining disaster, depending on how lucky you are. This new power-up sprays ink all over the screen, forcing you to navigate via the map and what little you can see through the gaps. If you're on a straight, it will wear off before you know it, but when you're navigating through Thwomps or lava pools…

△ Somebody is about to get inked – this is gonna hurt.

main GP mode is the most viciously unfair thing served up in *Mario Kart*'s five outings to date. It's almost unfeasibly competitive, with relentless jostling from the other racers when you're stuck in traffic and a barrage of unavoidable blue shells when you're (un)lucky enough to find yourself in the lead.

The unavoidable impression is that the game really resents the prospect of anyone taking its gold trophies and, when we finally wrested the last of them from its vicelike grip, our overriding emotion was relief, not elation.

Take that as you will. Flip ahead a couple of pages and look at the score, which we'll justify by saying that almost everything else about *Mario Kart DS* is excellent. From the all-important handling to the imaginative track design, from the visual flair to the generous array of game modes, this is a title that ticks many more boxes than most.

As far as past *Mario Karts* go, this one feels like *Double Dash* crossed with *Super Circuit*. The tracks are extremely wide, to accommodate eight racers, and the hop feature makes a welcome return following its absence from the Gamecube version. There are no coins to collect but you can gain a nifty speed boost by driving in somebody's slipstream.

Once again, the default karts are all of the *Wacky Races* variety (DK

△ Everybody's item stash revealed.

OLD AND NEW

This is a mixture of retro cool and DS technology…

△ Mario's gorgeous retro racer in action. It's our favourite car.

The DS easily manages to make the Pipe Plaza level from Double Dash look pretty much as sharp as it did on the Gamecube, which goes to show that underneath the silver casing, DS has got it going on. Yes.

There's the Banshee Boardwalk level from Mario Kart 64, for those who want a spot of gloomy, spooky racing. The Luigi's Mansion level, above, shows how far the tech has progressed. It looks miles better.

In general, they haven't included a retro track that has an updated 'nitro' equivalent. This Figure-8 Circuit replaces some of the old Mario Circuits from previous versions.

"WHEN IT COMES TO PLAYING MARIO KART, MULTIPLAYER IS WHERE IT'S REALLY AT…"

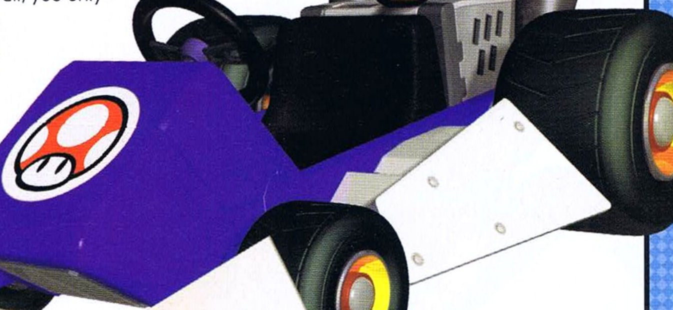
drives a rhinoceros on wheels, Luigi travels by vacuum cleaner) although Mario's Stirling Moss retro F1 effort is rather lovely. There's also a standard kart available, with slightly different stats, and you can unlock further vehicles by winning those gold trophies. Each car has individual stats, but there's really very little to choose between them. It's all a question of whether or not you mind being seen driving a wheeled version of your favourite character's head.

To add an individual touch that doesn't involve picking the most outlandish vehicle, you can design your own logo. A distinctive look can really make you stand out from the crowd in a multiplayer match, and we dread to think what's going to happen when the online mode gets into full swing.

Because when it comes to *Mario Kart*, multiplayer is where it's at. This version has the most generous array of multiplayer options to date and, because things can get a tiny bit chaotic with eight players going for it, you can divide them up into racing teams to compete for communal points.

Best of all, you only





BEYOND THE BOX

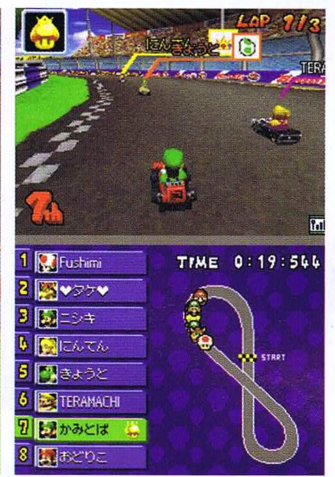
It's the first proper online Nintendo game!



SETTING UP
Getting your DS online is relatively painless, as long as you have a broadband connection and a wireless access point. After you first access the free Wi-Fi connection service you'll be allocated a 'friend code' which is how your mates will be able to find you.



MAKIN' RACIN'
You can only have four human racers at a time, and these can be random strangers or people you've given your friend code to. Everyone is identified by a name or emblem, just like in an ordinary multiplayer game, so you know exactly who you're shelling.



SERVING JUSTICE
Because the public servers weren't 'live' when we wrote this review, we can't tell you just how busy it might be or whether there will be any problems with lag. We'll bring you a full report soon, and publish our own friend codes so you can thrash us senseless.

△ **Have your cake and eat it, with the new, expanded Battle mode.**



△ **Yoshi's egg racer is not the most embarrassing kart to drive. There are worse…**



need one cartridge. You'll miss out on some of the tracks, and only the person hosting the game can choose a character (everyone else gets Shy Guys) but to have a game as big as this running on a bunch of empty handhelds is pretty amazing. If everybody has a cartridge then you'll get the full range of characters, tracks and dubious hand-drawn emblems.

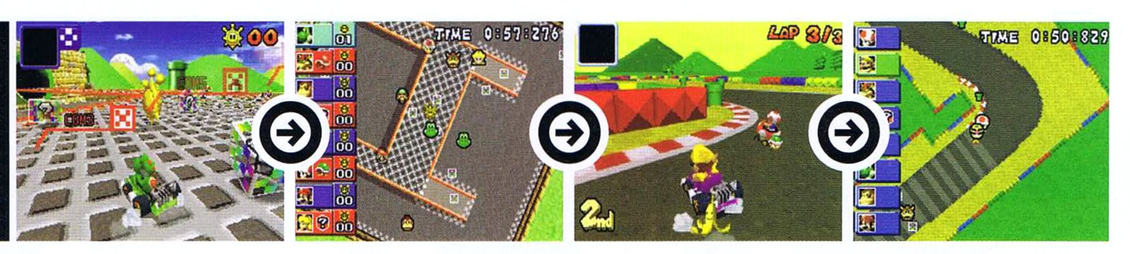
There are 16 new courses, which seem to get more graphically astonishing until the inevitable Rainbow Road letdown at the end (at least it isn't as bad as the N64 one). Most interestingly, there are an additional four courses from each of the previous four instalments in the series and, because we had such fun debating the merits of each one as we unlocked them, we won't spoil the surprise. Suffice to say that some of your favourites definitely won't

"THERE ARE AN ADDITIONAL FOUR COURSES FROM EACH OF THE PREVIOUS INCARNATIONS"



KNOW YOUR ENEMY

Or at least know where he is. That way, you can drop a sneaky banana or line up a perfect green shell shot, just as he thinks he's got you beaten. It makes grown men cry – we've seen it happen!





△ **Wario celebrates a miserable fourth place by making his kart hover.**



△ **Drive on the flat part for safety or the sloping part for speed.**

SPECIAL MISSION

Where *Mario Kart* meets *Diddy Kong Racing*







MONEY SHOT

There are several of these ones. You have to collect coins within a strict time limit – the faster you do it, the better your rating at the end. Sometimes the coins are hidden in sneaky places, such as directly behind the starting line, so you need that map screen.

SMASH AND CRAB

The weapon-based missions are trickier, thanks to the difficulty of lining up a shot when you're moving. Some bosses (including classics from Mario 64) have to be hit with shells, and there are shooting galleries featuring many old Mario Kart faves.

HOOP DREAMS

Driving through numbered hoops might seem easy, but when they're not placed in a logical order, or they're scattered in hard-to-reach corners of the track, it's quite a challenge. Sometimes you'll have to hit them all while reversing.

have made the cut, but every track is here for a good reason.

Suffice to say, opinion is going to be divided on this one. Some will say *Mario Kart DS* is the best thing ever, citing the fantastic multiplayer and the innate lack of 'skillz' of anyone frustrated by the GP mode. Others will point to a certain missing something, a vague lack of sparkling inspiration that maybe leaves the DS version just slightly short of its illustrious predecessors. But then that's *Mario Kart* for you – everyone's always had their favourites and for wildly different reasons. And at the end of the day no one could possibly resist the prospect of an eight-way battle dust-up, let alone an online tournament.



One thing everyone will agree on is that the game is definitely a bit on the slow side. It makes things more competitive in a multiplayer game, since you don't have the fastest driver zooming off into the distance every time, but in time trial mode the long, wide straights are dull, dull, dull.

And the lack of redefinable buttons is irritating, since our playing time was limited by the amount our arthritic hands hurt after squeezing A for the accelerator.

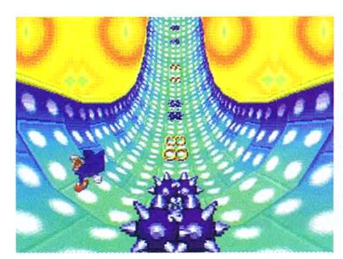
But buy it now, please. And go easy if you meet us online.

MARTIN KITTS





△ **The chuckable Bob-omb can also be dropped behind your kart.**


△ The only touch screen control comes in when Sonic triggers a bonus level.



△ Traps keep Sonic pinned down in one room til he's killed enough enemies.



△ New character Blaze is slower than Sonic, but has more aerial moves.



△ Even in the main 2D levels there are flashes of 3D flair.



△ When has 2D ever looked this good?



△ Boss fights – which both Sonic and Blaze must battle through – are in full 3D.

SONIC RUSH


FROM: SEGA **PLAYERS:** 2 **SINGLE CART LINK:** YES **MICROPHONE:** NO **OUT:** NOV 25 **COST:** £30

Fifteen years on Sonic hits the DS. Is he out of puff or breathless with excitement?



△ As well as grabbing rings, you need to pull off air combos for high scores.



△ Build up Sonic's power meter with special moves to reach the bonus level.

Stop and think about that title for a moment and see if your knees start to wobble. *Sonic Rush* – yes, that's right, *Rush*. Sonic, whose idea of a stroll is to tear a strip of burning turf round the entire circumference of the Earth on his way to the corner shop, is coming to the DS and he's in a *hurry*. Just being the fastest game character ever created is old news for him; he wants to get a bit of a move on. And that's a terrifying thought.

Terrifying and wonderful, of course. Sonic has always been about speed thrills, and discovering that the DS's touch screen, microphone, wireless and all the rest haven't distracted Sega from the basics is brilliant news. This is, plain and simple, a classic Sonic game. Start on the left of the screen and head to the right a tiny bit faster than the human eye can actually detect, swooping, twirling and ricocheting as you go. Thanks to the action being spread across both screens, levels are vast and intricate, with dozens of alternative routes and hidden goodies that encourage you to play through again and again. The controls are tight and responsive and the speed, as the title promises, is intense.

> **"SONIC'S IDEA OF A STROLL IS TO TEAR A STRIP OF BURNING TURF AROUND THE EARTH"**

There are a couple of problems, though. The ludicrous speed combined with the screen swapping nature of this double-decker adventure mean that it does wear your eyes out pretty quickly. Also, the sections which slow down Sonic's progress – mainly the enforced combat where he has to fight his way out of a trap – interrupt the flow. But, those are niggles: it all looks peachy, the action is fast, the tunes are brilliant, the cutscenes are short and the bosses don't ruin your fun.

Throw in some great single-cart link-up races and you and your friends are guaranteed to enjoy many happy hours with this breakneck fun park. Sonic may be in a rush, but Sega clearly weren't when they crafted this glorious game.

MARGARET ROBERTSON







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GOLDEN JOYSTICK AWARDS WINNERS ANNOUNCED!

YOUR VOTES HAVE BEEN COUNTED FOR THE BIGGEST GAMES AWARDS OF THE YEAR...

THE CARPHONE WAREHOUSE HANDHELD GAME OF THE YEAR

SUPER MARIO 64 DS
PUBLISHER: NINTENDO

RUNNERS UP:
- Burnout Legends (Electronic Arts)
- Advance Wars: Dual Strike (Nintendo)

THE SUN ONLINE – ONLINE GAME OF THE YEAR

WORLD OF WARCRAFT
PUBLISHER: VIVENDI

RUNNERS UP:
- Battlefield (Electronic Arts)
- EVE Online: Exodus (CCP)

PC GAME OF THE YEAR

HALF-LIFE 2
PUBLISHER: VIVENDI

RUNNERS UP:
- Football Manager 2005 (Sega)
- Warhammer 40,000: Dawn of War - Winter Assult (THQ)

GAMECUBE GAME OF THE YEAR

RESIDENT EVIL 4
PUBLISHER: CAPCOM

RUNNERS UP:
- Call of Duty: Finest Hour (Activision)
- The Legend of Zelda: Four Swords Adventures (Nintendo)

XBOX GAME OF THE YEAR

HALO 2
PUBLISHER: MICROSOFT

RUNNERS UP:
- Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas (Rockstar)
- Star Wars Knights of the Old Republic II: The Sith Lords (LucasArts)

PLAYSTATION 2 GAME OF THE YEAR

GRAND THEFT AUTO: SAN ANDREAS
PUBLISHER: ROCKSTAR

RUNNERS UP:
- Pro Evolution Soccer 4 (Konami)
- Metal Gear Solid 3: Snake Eater (Konami)

BEST FILM-BASED GAME OF 2005

RESIDENT EVIL 4
PUBLISHER: CAPCOM

RUNNERS UP:
- Star Wars Knights of the Old Republic II: The Sith Lords (LucasArts)
- Spider-Man 2 (Activision)

THE GIRLS' CHOICE OF 2005

THE SIMS 2
PUBLISHER: ELECTRONIC ARTS

RUNNERS UP:
- Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas (Rockstar)
- Resident Evil 4 (Capcom)

IN STOCK RETAILER OF THE YEAR

PLAY.COM

RUNNERS UP:
- Gameplay
- GAME

HERO OF 2005

CJ
FROM GRAND THEFT AUTO: SAN ANDREAS

RUNNERS UP:
- Gordon Freeman (from Half-Life 2)
- Master Chief (from Halo 2)

VILLAIN OF 2005

OFFICER TENPENNY
FROM GRAND THEFT AUTO: SAN ANDREAS

RUNNERS UP:
- Saddler (from Resident Evil 4)
- Dr Breen (from Half-Life 2)

RADIO 1'S BEST GAME SOUNDTRACK OF 2005

GRAND THEFT AUTO: SAN ANDREAS
PUBLISHER: ROCKSTAR

RUNNERS UP:
- Halo 2 (Microsoft)
- Need for Speed Underground 2 (EA)

GAME ONE – INNOVATION OF THE YEAR

SONY PSP

RUNNERS UP:
- Nintendo DS
- Valve Steam

THE SUN ONE TO WATCH FOR 2006

RESIDENT EVIL 5
PUBLISHER: CAPCOM

RUNNERS UP:
- Final Fantasy XII (Square Enix)
- Age of Empires III (Microsoft)

EDITORS' UNSUNG HERO OF THE YEAR

FAHRENHEIT
PUBLISHER: ATARI

NOMINATED:
- God of War (Sony)
- Psychonauts (THQ)

THE ONE TO WATCH FOR XMAS 2005

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: TWILIGHT PRINCESS
PUBLISHER: NINTENDO

RUNNERS UP:
- Grand Theft Auto: Liberty City Stories (Rockstar)
- Call of Duty 2 (Activision)

SONOPRESS – PUBLISHER OF THE YEAR

NINTENDO

RUNNERS UP:
- Rockstar Games
- THQ

EDITORS' GAME OF THE YEAR

RESIDENT EVIL 4
PUBLISHER: CAPCOM

RUNNERS UP:
- Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas(Rockstar)
- Pro Evolution Soccer 4 (Konami)

NUTS MAGAZINE ULTIMATE GAME OF THE YEAR

GRAND THEFT AUTO: SAN ANDREAS
PUBLISHER: ROCKSTAR

RUNNERS UP:
- EVE Online: Exodus (CCP)
- Resident Evil 4 (Capcom)

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△ Each case begins with a murder illustrated with some tastefully shocking artwork before you're sent off to investigate.

PHOENIX WRIGHT ACE ATTORNEY



△ There's nothing more satisfying than when the case is coming to an end and you inch closer towards exposing the murderer.



FROM: NINTENDO **PLAYERS:** 1 **SINGLE CART LINK:** NO
MICROPHONE: YES **OUT:** NOW **COST:** £30

The DS has its day in court…

We've had a sneaking suspicion about this one for some time. We've always liked the idea of it and it's always looked lovely but we must admit we've had our doubts about just how a 'lawyer game' would work. As it happens, it works very well indeed. Granted, it might not be everyone's cup of tea but it's so different and engaging that you owe it to yourself to at least try.

It plays out in two specific ways: part courtroom drama and part detective story. If you can imagine an anime-styled fusion of daytime TV travesties *Columbo* and *Murder She Wrote* then you're half-way there. When you're not in the courtroom, you're investigating the case, talking to different characters at various locations (accessible through a menu system) and examining the locations for evidence or items of interest that could help you in court. Anything you find that's of any significance will be logged in your 'Court Record', a menu that you can call up at any time to present evidence or simply to check facts. Examining things carefully will be the key to undermining the prosecution when the time comes.

The second aspect of the game is the courtroom itself. Here you'll hear testimonies from the important characters in each case and get the chance to cross-examine. This is done by flicking backwards and forwards through each passage of a testimony (you can do this as much as you like) and trying to find a contradiction between what's been said and the

YOU CAN HANDLE THE TRUTH...



In order to uncover the truth and prove your case to the judge and jury, you will need to investigate different locations outside the court and accumulate the right evidence. Once you've got enough, it's time for justice.



Winning comes down to finding holes in a witness's testimony and revealing them to the judge. You can do this either by pressing the witness on specific facts in their testimony or by uncovering contradictions.



If a witness's testimony conflicts with evidence you have already established as fact, simply present your evidence at the right point in the dialogue to expose them as liars, liars, pant on fires.



If you are successful, you'll have the great pleasure of watching a witness crumble before your eyes. Present evidence unwisely too many times though, the judge will overrule it and you'll lose the case.



▵ There are loads of dialogue snippets that'll have you chuckling all day. They're excellently translated from the Japanese.

evidence you have in your Court Record. If you don't have any evidence to prove a contradiction, you can press a witness to be more specific about something in their testimony. Press them enough, in the right place, and they might change their testimony and bring a contradiction to light. Pick enough holes in what they say and you will eventually uncover the truth, though you will fail the case if too many of your objectives get overruled. The further through the game you get, the harder it gets to uncover these contradictions, and the longer the cases get (often spanning many days), the more sleuthing you have to do between court appearances.

It works brilliantly and, although *Phoenix* is *very* text heavy with reams and reams of dialogue to tap through, each case is well thought through, with memorable characters and strong, well-told stories. It's also very, very funny in places, and had us snorting in genuine amusement at regular intervals.

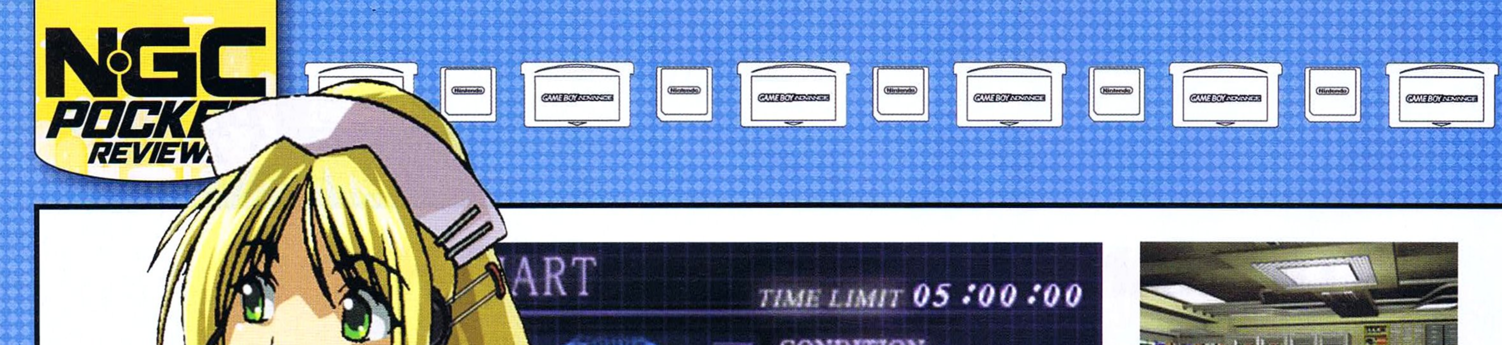
"AN ANIME FUSION OF COLUMBO AND MURDER SHE WROTE..."

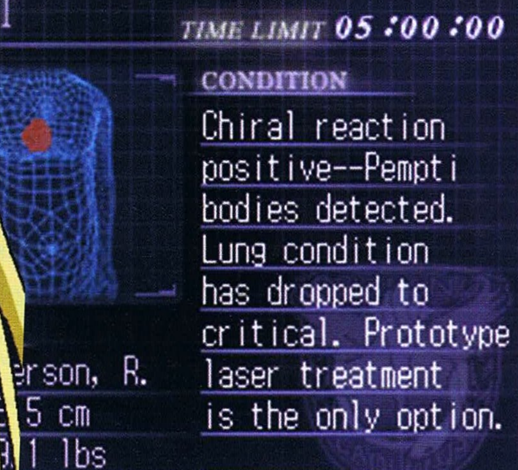
There are, however, a couple of irritating niggles. Having to move back and forth between locations can get a little tedious at times and, disappointingly, it's all very heavily scripted. At one point, for example, we figured out that a receipt was going to be important to a particular case, so we presented it as evidence in court. This action was then overruled, despite it being perfectly pertinent, because it wasn't the right time in the game to present it. So, it's not quite as clever as we would have liked, but considering this is our only valid objection, your honour, it should give you some indication as to how good this really is.

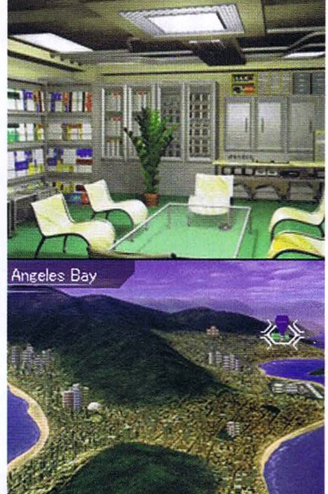
GERAINT EVANS

DUAL ★★★★
TOUCH ★★★
4









△ The game takes you to many hospitals and clinics within the city.

△ There's a surprisingly large cast of characters.



△ Tougher surgeries require all manner of different techniques to solve.



△ It's not all surgery – there are some puzzles and even a bomb disposal!



TRAUMA CENTRE: UNDER THE KNIFE

FROM: ATLUS **PLAYERS:** 1 **SINGLE CART LINK:** NO **MICROPHONE:** NO **OUT:** NOW (US) **COST:** $40 (£23)

Scalpel... forceps... grab a mop, nurse, we're going in!

The last game to have this kind of effect on us was *Meteos*. Yeah, they're both very different games but the one thing that stands out with *Trauma Centre* is the way it gets your heart pounding and your brow sweat flowing. It often leaves you breathless from the intense concentration and the feeling of relief after a time-sensitive, high-pressure procedure can leave you feeling mentally and physically exhausted.

Trauma is best described as a super-advanced version of MB Games's classic Operation. Each level (or rather 'episode') presents you with a patient that has some kind of condition, a tumour, glass in the heart, parasites in the body – that kind of thing. In order to treat them you have to use ten different surgical aids such as bandages, suture, forceps, scalpel and antibiotic gel. To be successful in each procedure, you need to treat the patient before their life-signs drop down to zero (ie they're dead), the timer runs out or you make too many leaky mistakes.

Early levels are pretty simple as you're introduced to each of the instruments at a steady rate, with a full explanation by your hand-holding assistant. Open the body with a scalpel, find the tumour with a scanner, drain the fluid, excise the tumour, patch the wound and sew. Easy. But it gets harder. Much harder.

Once you're through the introductory stage, the hand-holding stops and you simply have to know what instrument to use and when. Time pressures get stricter, the patient's vitals drop faster and the problems get harder to deal with. Patients start bleeding and need to be patched, parasites open new wounds, tumours spread faster and it's all happening very quickly.

Trauma requires super-quick reflexes and almost super-human levels of concentration, while in some operations, the difficulty is pitched at insane levels. It can be pretty frustrating as a result, something that is often compounded by the vagueness of how you go about an operation and some of the game's design hiccups. Sometimes you know what you want to achieve but you



△ **Activate the Healing Touch and time will slow to a crawl, helping with trickier procedures.**



△ **Here you have to find evil little parasites and then suck their juices out for a later surgical procedure.**

SCRUB UP. THIS IS GONNA GET MESSY

Despite looking fairly simplistic at times, there's no denying that the visuals can really prod at your sick trigger. Watching a giant piece of glass emerging from a beating heart, injecting throbbing aneurisms and sucking the puss out of tumours are all satisfyingly grisly processes, and combined with the often super-strict time limits, each one can really set your pulse pounding. Not one to play in your lunch break then…









don't know how to do it, while the subtle wielding of certain instruments can be tricky when you're elbow-deep in a dangerous operation. Some procedures feel like a case of trial and error, which is made worse by the fact that there is no 'replay' option mid-operation. This means going back to the start if you screw up and having to go through loads of dialogue before you start again.

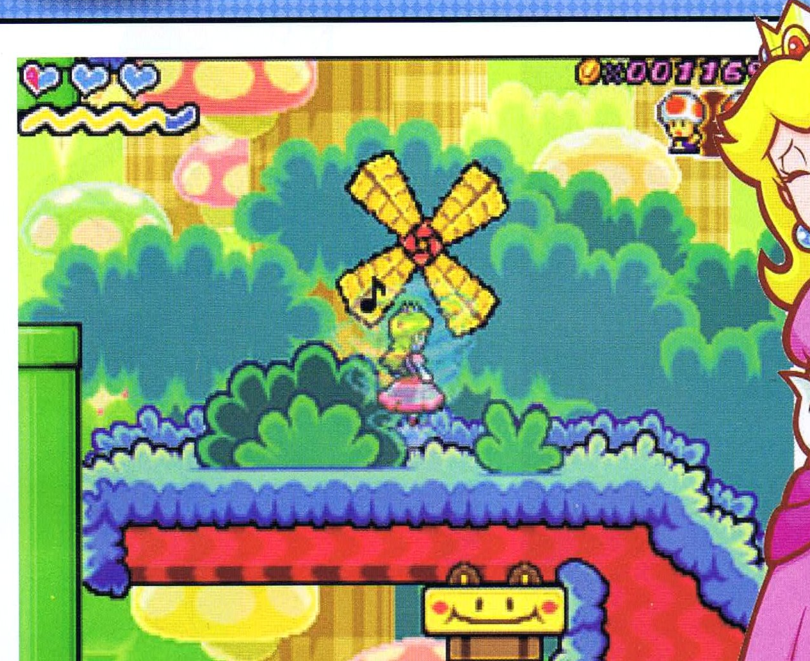
But you *will* keep playing. Operations only last four or five minutes, so there's a strong impetus to keep at it. Likewise, the storyline, despite being very hammy and melodramatic (in a so bad, it's good kind of way), lends a sense of purpose to the operations. And the fact that we've been obsessed with it for an entire month shows just how much we've enjoyed it.

GERAINT EVANS

"PARASITES OPEN NEW WOUNDS AND TUMOURS SPREAD FASTER"







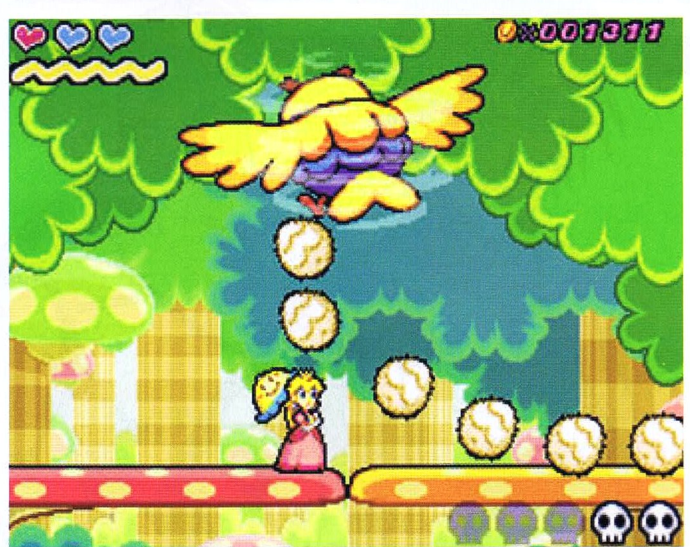
△ Use Peach's happy dancing power to whirlwind up that, er, windmill and open up the gateway below to free a Toad.



△ Swing your umbrella, beat Koopas or stomp on them Mario-style.



△ Use the stylus to rotate the log, sending Her Royal Highness upward.



△ This boss shoots out eggs at you. You need to smack him in the head when he swoops, before you find yourself hurtling to the ground below.

SUPER PRINCESS PEACH



FROM: NINTENDO **SAVE:** ON CART **PLAYERS:** 1 **OUT:** NOW (US) **MIC:** YES **COST:** 6,200 ¥ (£30)

Can the Princess out-pink *'Power Paintbrush'*?

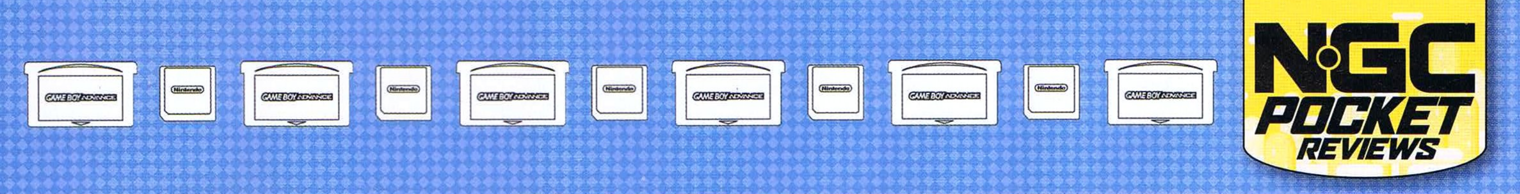


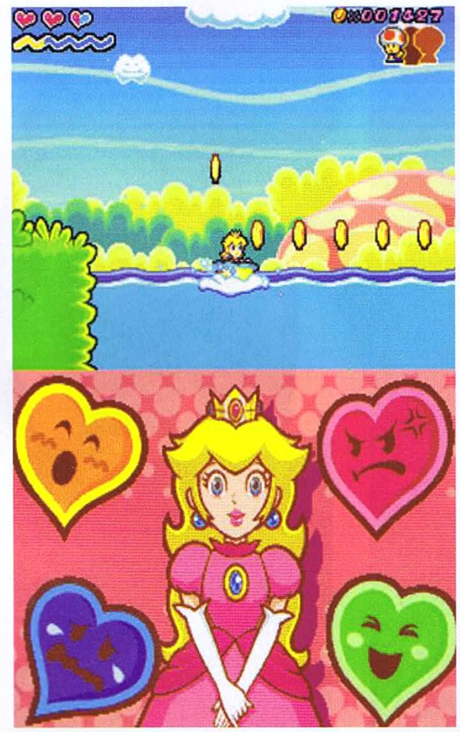
We don't think we're exaggerating when we say that Nintendo couldn't make a bad 2D platformer if it tried. Honestly, they've been banging them out for two decades so far and know how to push all the right fun buttons. Sometimes, although not always, they can even make them inventive in their own little way. Mario, Wario, Yoshi, Kirby, hell, even Starfi has a pretty enviable track record when it comes from running left to right and jumping over things. So now, perhaps inevitably, it's Peach's turn.

The story is suitably rubbish. Mario's been kidnapped and it's up to… blah, blah, blah. Cue Peach then, for a familiar side-scrolling romp through the Mushroom Kingdom.

Superficially, it's all very *Mario*. There are Goombas and Koopas to be stomped, coins to be collected and blocks to smash open with the Princess's delicate little bonce. No prizes for originality there then. However, there's a smart little mechanic that helps nudge things in the 'interesting' direction – namely Princess's 'emotional' powers.

The bottom screen has a picture of Peach and her expression changes depending on what's going on. Normally she looks like she's been on the receiving end of some dodgy, back-street collagen injections, but walk her into an enemy and she'll look sad, and if you do something good she'll get all happy. Purely cosmetic stuff – but either side of her you'll find four hearts that



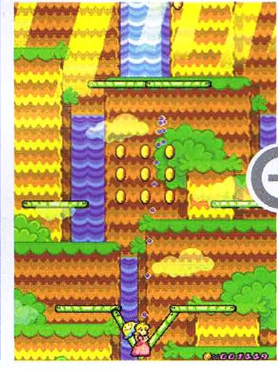

△ Peach's umbrella can be turned into a boat, which enables you to sail across water.


△ The artwork is some of the nicest we've seen since *Yoshi's Island*. Doesn't she look lovely?


△ Cross the finish line to shower her Royal Highness in cold hard cash. Surely she's got enough dough.

TOUCHY

Other than the heart-powers, Peach doesn't use the touch screen that much, although there are a couple of notable exceptions. The journey to the first boss for example, demands you twang the princess up the screen using stretchy vines, collecting coins as you go…







temporarily activate her special powers. The blue heart will make her cry, and you can use the water to make little plants grow, so you can get up higher. Touch the red heart and she'll burst into flames – an anger-fuelled blaze that can burn through wood. Also, if you touch the happy orange heart, she'll start dancing and floating up into the clouds. In the top left-hand corner of the screen, there's a little gauge (replenished by picking up blue coins) that allows you to use these powers, so part of the game's difficulty comes from using these powers at the right time to access hidden areas where each of the level's three Toads is being held captive.

Secondary to these powers is Peach's umbrella, which basically acts like a weapon. You can use it to beat the crap out of the Mushroom Kingdom's indigenous wildlife or, better still, use it to pick enemies up and hurl them across the screen. You can also use it as a boat to cross water and, just like our own umbrellas, it gives you advice – entirely in Japanese of course.

"HONESTLY IT'S THE PINKEST, SUGARIEST, GAYEST PLATFORMER EVER"

So that's your lot, and we have to say, we're actually rather impressed. On the whole it's not particularly difficult (although some of the Toads turn out to be pigs to find) but in many ways that helps things tick along at an enjoyable pace. Its most notable charm though, is that it's so god damn happy. Not just 'a bit' happy, but 'super' happy. Honestly, it's the pinkest, sugariest, 'gayest' platformer imaginable, and that in itself guarantees a huge grin for anyone wise enough to import it…

GERAINT EVANS



4





△ **Hello, talking lion man.**







△ **Hit the giant's shins to kill him.**


△ **Adventuring through Narnia with a party of four homicidal children.**


△ **It's all gone a bit Lion King.**

△ **Try following these conversations…**



△ **The face of a natural born killer.**

CHRONICLES OF NARNIA:
THE LION, THE WITCH & THE WARDROBE



FROM: BUENA VISTA **PLAYERS:** 1-4 **SINGLE CART LINK:** NO **MIC:** NO **OUT:** NOW **COST:** £30

Furniture meets fairies as CS Lewis's classic kids novel gets the film tie-in treatment…

There's something very Shigsyesque about finding the route to a secret world hidden beneath a pile of old coats, which is one reason for believing the Narnia tales might produce a series of decent games.

Sadly, we're denied the wardrobe-rummaging opener that would have been perfect on DS. Instead, a white light beams out from the magical piece of furniture and the adventurous Pevensie children are whisked away to a realm somewhere between Middle Earth and Hogwarts. Blame Hollywood for that.

But once you're over the not-quite-like-the-book (but probably exactly like the forthcoming movie) shock, you're left with a lightweight but still fairly enjoyable DS battle-RPG that has more than a hint of *Baldur's Gate* about it. It's hack 'n' slash central, with the experience points you earn from slaughtering Narnia's various forest creatures boosting your four characters' levels up in four categories – valour, gentleness, justice and, erm, magnificence. The more gently magnificent you become, the fewer valiant hits it takes to kill things.

The story is told via branching conversations which are often a little hard to follow. The character you're talking to appears on the upper screen, with various responses listed on the bottom one. Having to switch your attention between the two leads to some confusion because since the next set of choices appears as soon as you select a response, you find yourself looking at possible answers to a question you've yet to read. CS Lewis would not have approved.

As the adventure progresses, you fight countless identical copies of the same respawning enemies on plain backgrounds with a poor framerate.

SLAUGHTER NARNIA'S FOREST CREATURES FOR EXPERIENCE

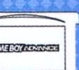
Neither the greatest looking game nor the deepest in terms of its action and story, there's still a certain charm about it. Diehard Narnia fans, younger gamers and those simply desperate for some hack 'n' slash on DS will get more from this than us.

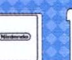
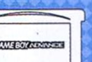
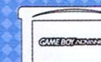
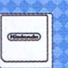
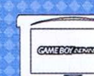
MARTIN KITTS









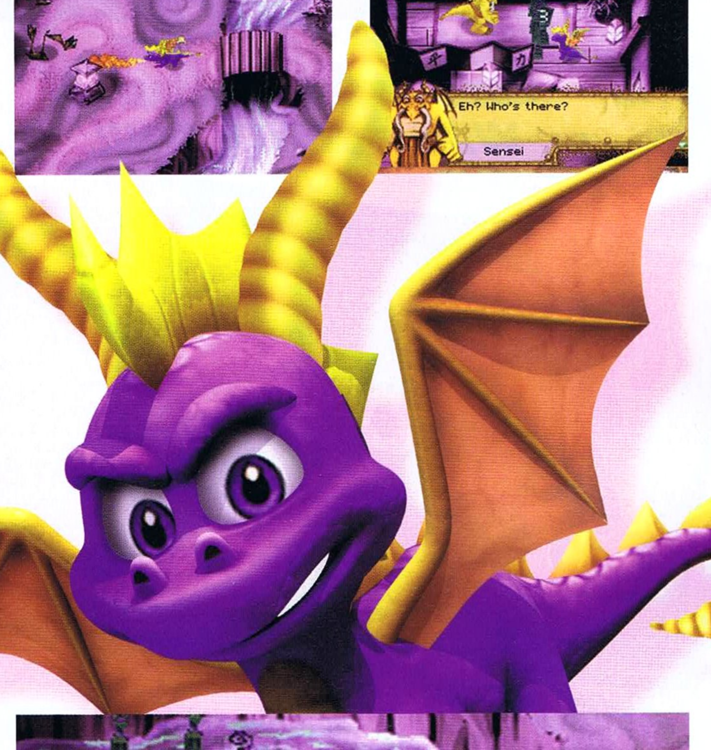









▲ These bears can kill Spyro with a single paw-smush at the start of the game.







SPYRO
SHADOW LEGACY



FROM: VIVENDI **PLAYERS:** 1 **SINGLE CART LINK:** NO
MICROPHONE: NO **OUT:** NOW **COST:** £30



▲ Spyro locates an imprisoned super dragon or something like that.

There's no puff and little magic in a game that really does drag on...



You know, we thought *Narnia* was a little rough in terms of technical prowess, but compared to *Spyro*, it's a masterclass in games coding. This one's been programmed so ineptly, any good ideas are swamped by appalling jerkiness and unpredictable collision detection.

Not that there are even that many good ideas. It's a pseudo-RPG platform adventure set in a world that's been split in two by some evil force. You've got a light half and a dark half, which you can flip between via special transportation pads, and most of the puzzles involve a fair amount of switching.

It's vaguely reminiscent of one of the levels in *Four Swords* on the Gamecube, although you do have to squint a bit to spot the faint resemblance. Because once you've seen this baby move, you'll have a hard time telling what the heck is going on.

The whole thing is sluggish to the point of unplayability. It runs like an emulator game on a too-slow PC, with flickery scrolling and painful control delays. Simply walking around an object becomes an unmanageable chore thanks to the invisible edges that catch and hold Spyro when it seems like there's plenty of room. Round objects appear to have square force fields around them – nasty.

> **"IT'S A PSEUDO-RPG PLATFORM ADVENTURE SET IN A WORLD SPLIT IN TWO BY EVIL"**

In the unlikely event that you find it in your heart to forgive these basic failings, there's little to recommend. The action is repetitive, the combat deeply irritating and the story puts the 'dire' in dialogue. It's probably the worst *Spyro* game ever made, and that's saying something. Even fans of the series will want to give this a wide berth.

MARTIN KITTS





▲ There's your bottom screen. Lovely.



WIN 10 MARIO KART DS BUNDLES

The sexiest, red-iest DS ever made!

In celebration of the sheer awesome-ness that is *Mario Kart DS* we've got a colossal 10 *Mario Kart* bundles to give away.

Each bundle contains a scorching Red DS (they're very, *very* nice actually – we know this because we've had the pleasure of holding one), a copy of *Mario Kart* and some custom stickers with which to flame-up your already lovely hardware. Oh, and you also get a special *Mario Kart* themed wrist strap too – you know, just to finish the look. We think you'll also get some kind of cardboard box as well. Not sure how that works exactly.

Want one? Answer the question below, fill out the form, cut it out and send it to us at the address below by Dec 23. If you don't want to cut up your mag, scribble the answer on a postcard and send it to us.

Red Hot Racer
NGC Magazine
30 Monmouth St
Bath
BA1 2PR



I'M SOOO CLEVER!

Name: ....

Address: ....
....
....
....
....
....

Postcode: ....

My Answer: ....
....
....

Q: Which of the following Nintendo characters has never been a playable character in the *Mario Kart* series?

A) Donkey Kong

B) Toadette

C) Kamek

PREVIOUS WINNERS

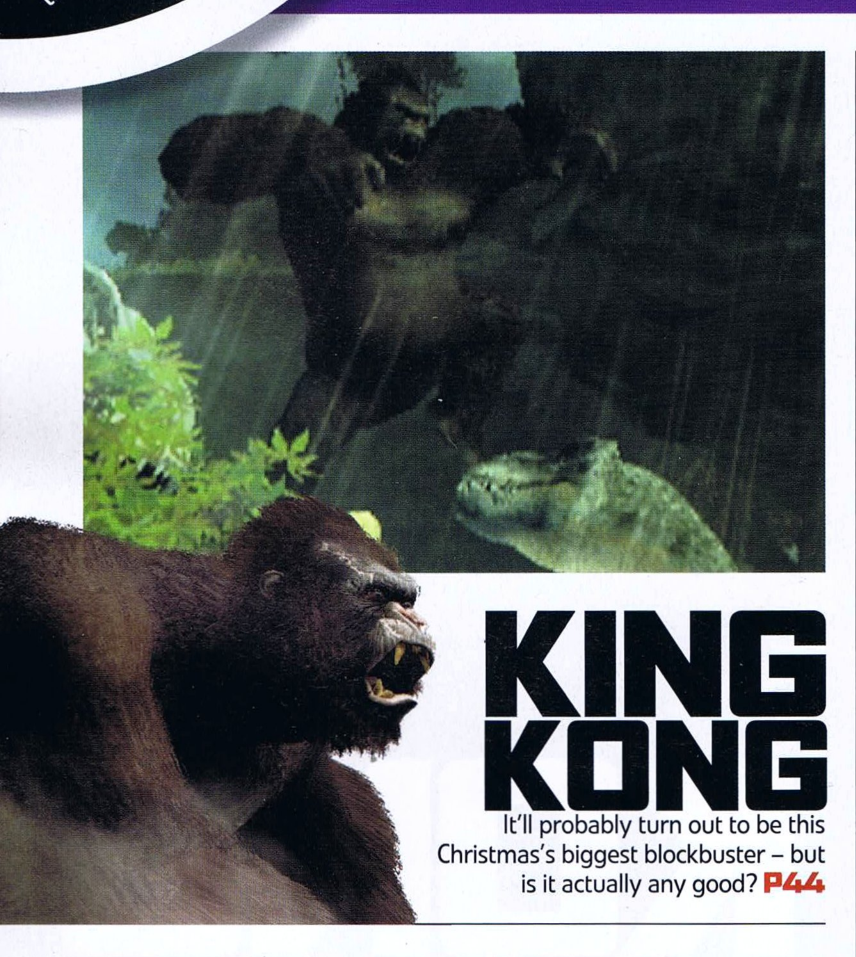
Gone To The Dog's NGC/112
Alison Bell, Washington, Tyne and Wear
John Booth, Whitchurch, Hants
Matthew Duffell, Chorley, Lancs
Niko Joenperä, Siivkkala, Finland
Chloe Whinchup, Leeds, Yorkshire

The correct answer was C: Great White

OUR PROMISE Our reviewers are the most talented and knowledgeable Nintendo fans in the business. We don't only play games at work – we play them at home too, just like you. We ensure that we've played games through to the end so that we can give you a proper verdict – and one that saves you from wasting money.

NGC THE VERDICT YOU DESERVE!

REVIEWS



KING KONG

It'll probably turn out to be this Christmas's biggest blockbuster – but is it actually any good? P44

NEED FOR SPEED MOST WANTED

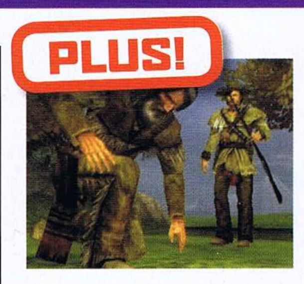
For the first time in two years you're not driving around on a mirror. It's a miracle! P48







PLUS!



GUN

Scalping, wolf-hunting and horseriding – it's the Wild West's GTA. P52

SHADOW THE HEDGEHOG

He's back – and he's bad. Unfortunately, in more ways than one P56

SSX ON TOUR

The fourth in the series. Now with added Skis, Mario and, er, Rock. P58

FIRE EMBLEM PATH OF RADIANCE

It's like a medieval *Advance Wars*! And it's the business too… P60

AND MORE…

That's right – *more*. We've got EA's latest *Bond* attempt, more from the *Hawk*, and a bit o' *Joe*.

OUR SCORING SYSTEM

0-24
Crushingly awful, massively dull. Rest assured this game is absolute crud.

25-49
A disappointing title, stashed with nasty faults and likely to be short on any quality.

50-74
Some great bits, some not-so great bits. Decent but definitely problems.

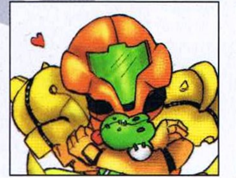
75-89
Great fun, brilliantly programmed at times, but probably flawed.

90+
Rarely awarded, a 90+ is essential. Buy with confidence.



MEET THE NGC TEAM

Okay, easy one this month – What do you want for Christmas?



TOM E
Santa's already promised me a new haircut, so a Delia Smith apron would be great. "Let's be 'avin ya!" as I believe she said.



MARTIN
A new bath would be nice. You won't believe how fast that acid eats through the enamel – and people are starting to ask questions.



PAUL
Can I have my old job back please? C'mon guys, It was a joke. I didn't really mean those things I said about your mothers… honest.



GERAINT
We would ask, but after seeing all those DS RPGs he disappeared, muttering something about lying down in a dark room.



GREENER
I want tickets to see that bare-knuckle cage match between Reggie and Miyamoto. Some socks too, and maybe a satsuma.



STEVE
'I want Crash Bandicoot's head on a stick'. Anything else…? Don't… Steve… Steve! Stop staring at us like that…


△ Wait, is she patting that raptor or screaming for her life? Shoot! Shoot!


△ Until New York, big drops can't kill Kong.







KING KONG

Or: unfinished monkey business…



PUBLISHER	UBISOFT
DEVELOPER	UBISOFT
RELEASE DATE	OUT NOW
PLAYERS	1
MEM. CARD PAGES	120
GBA LINK-UP	NO
SURROUND SOUND	YES
WIDESCREEN	YES
COST	£40







Quite a funny feeling, being part of the food chain. In most games, the equation's simple: you're the enemy, and everyone wants to kill you. In *Kong*, though, you play a mild-mannered hors d'oeuvre – definitely a tasty snack for the inhabitants of Skull Island, but really no more appetising than a foot-long grub or freshly-skewered dragonfly. You also occasionally play Kong himself, taking you from quivering side-dish to furry uber-carnivore in one swift camera cut.

Understandably – because so few things can actually threaten the monkey – you spend most game time being Adrian Brody, star of the film. Stranded on the island, you're reduced to using whatever you can find to survive: sticks, bones, spears and handy fire-pots. You can also distract your enemies with tastier, smaller animals. It's because of this that *Kong* doesn't feel much like a conventional first-person-shooter. Ammo is super-limited and best conserved for the really desperate moments, so most fights involve lots of dashing about, desperately trying to find another pointy stick, even yanking half-broken ones out of dead enemies. Odder still, there's no actual energy bar – taking hits simply makes your vision go fuzzy and replaces the shrieking dinos with classical music (hey, Brody *was* in *The Pianist*), and

> **"YOU CAN DISTRACT YOUR ENEMIES WITH TASTIER, SMALLER ANIMALS..."**


△ Planes drop caches of ammo – but won't pick you up.

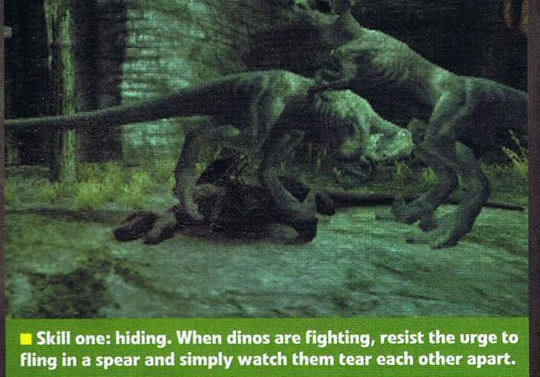

△ A bronto boot to the skull only winds you, oddly.



SURVIVAL SKILLS

Ray 'Tubsy' Mears wouldn't last 20 seconds in this jungle – you'll need more than a penknife to survive.





■ Skill one: hiding. When dinos are fighting, resist the urge to fling in a spear and simply watch them tear each other apart.

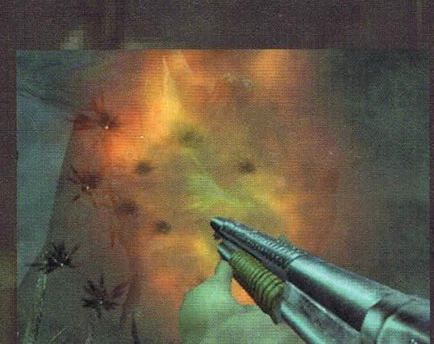
■ Skill two: feeding. To clear annoying spider nests, attach a juicy bug to a stick and fling it in the opposite direction. Easy.



■ Skill three: burning stuff. Stuck? Simple – raze hundreds of square metres of lush vegetation to the ground.



△ Aaah! Spider attacks can be genuinely traumatic.



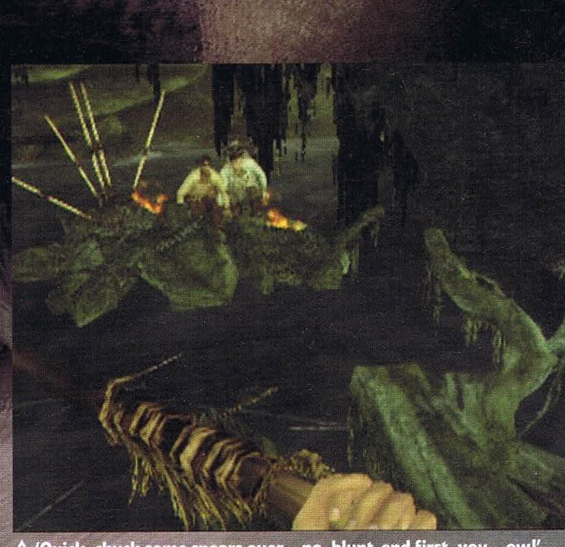
△ Shotguns work best at point blank range, natch.



△ Don't worry – if those dinos are slowing you up, Anne will pause to give you a chance to get your breath back. She clearly fancies Kong – she probably plays with her hair and everything.

resting for a few seconds is enough to completely recover. It's a clever system because, as you're only ever two good raptor-chomps from death or a quick sprint from safety, every enemy has to be taken seriously, making every scrap a desperate fight for survival. Puzzles are basic but pleasant enough – think along the lines of playing fire-tag between waterfall sections, trying to get a flame to the brambles to burn a path, or fetching handles for the gates dotted around the game.

Not that you're alone, of course. *Kong*'s structured a lot like the *Medal Of Honor* series, in that it's packed with sections where you can't actually do anything but move your field of vision while spectacular set-pieces happen around you. In most sections, you've got at least one character holding your hand, telling you what to do next and helping out on shooting duty. Strangely, they're often actually *better* than you – lobbing you guns or taking out difficult enemies without waiting for you to catch up. Despite wearing a flimsy nightie for most of the game, Naomi Watts is perfectly happy to scramble up cliffs and over brambles

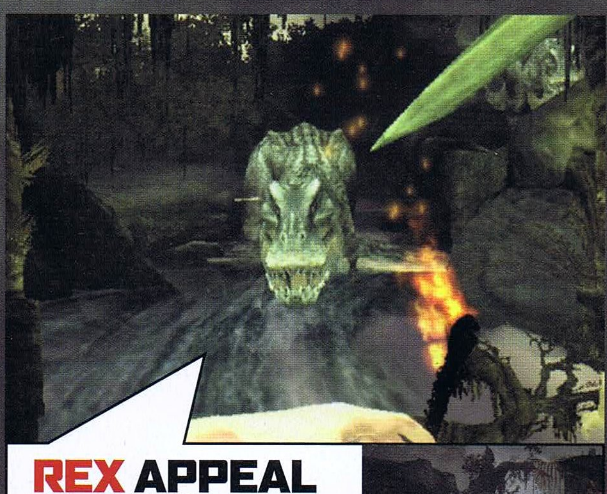


△ 'Quick, chuck some spears over...no, blunt-end first, you...ow!'

"fine for butter-fingered film fans"

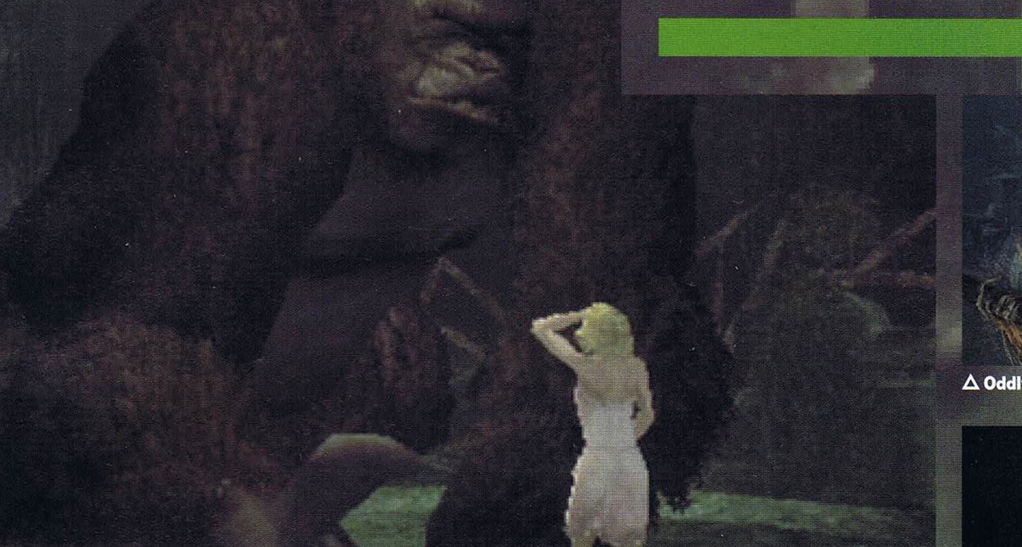


In situations like this, it's best to single out the tastiest/weakest looking dino, kill that, and run away making dinner gong noises.



REX APPEAL

The battles with the T-Rex are easily the best moments. All you can really do is prod him with sticks while your gang tries to find an escape route. In one memorable moment, we actually pistol-whipped him in the teeth and made him flinch. Joyous.



"Look, this *clearly* isn't going to work. I mean, you're obviously a Capricorn and I'm a textbook Sagittarius…"



Oddly, natives seem happy to burn stuff.



Clips run out in seconds – just like real life.

in her bare feet, finding switches you can't reach in return for being protected from raptors. It's a dynamic that keeps things chugging along – you're rarely stuck or unsure what to do – but for hardened gamers, it can feel awfully patronising at times. We wouldn't swear to it in court or anything, but at times it actually feels like the game makes itself *easier* – after three attempts at a tricky batbeast section, we were getting ready for the second wave when Jack Black shouted 'come on!' and the game ploughed ahead. It feels like the game's been designed to get casual *Kong*-fans through with minimal fuss, which is fine for butter-fingered film fans but awful if you're after a challenge.

And as fast-paced though the action is, it can get tiresome at times. Inevitably, you spend an awful lot of time killing waves of very similar enemies, doing similar puzzles and exploring oddly familiar scenery. The developers' hands were obviously tied by the jungle setting, but some sections simply go on too long – one raft-based bit seemed to take twenty minutes and two loading pauses, with us cursing because we couldn't snipe the natives lobbing



WATCH MY BLACK

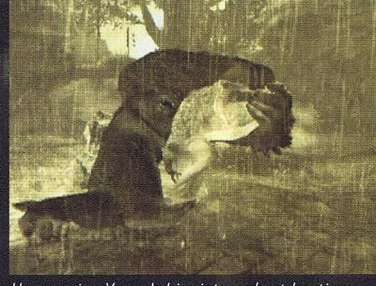
Thanks to the fact that Jack Black spends the entire game fiddling with his camera instead of helping you, you will try to shoot/stab him, but you can't, because some magical force stops you. Similarly, during hectic sniper bouts, your finger sometimes won't close on the trigger because you're pointing at an ally. It's a bit weird, but it works.

APE SHALL NOT KILL APE

But oversized lizards are, like, totally fine.



Enemies that take Brody five minutes of sobbing, hiding, Tommy-gunning action are nothing more than strange noises underfoot for Kong – anything smaller than a T-Rex is simply a hindrance to him. He wants to stroke Naomi Watts, and you'd be an idiot to stand in his way.



Hammering Y sends him into a chest-beating frenzy, tinting the screen a nice shade of sepia.



Get in a grappling situation and hammer the buttons to do some dental work on Rex.



△ **Even Tommy guns can only tickle Rex. Better hope Kong's on the way.**



△ **Entertainingly, some dinos keep coming even with a hideful of**

spears at us. Set-pieces keep your interest level up – the frantic brontosaurus run's an absolute corker – but by the end of the game, you'll never want to spear another flying bat for the rest of your life.

By the way, you've probably noticed we haven't mentioned the sections where you play Kong yet. That's because they're totally underwhelming, like *Prince Of Persia* with a giant monkey wedged in and all the skill suctioned out. They're clearly designed for dramatics – the camera twirls around so you've always got the best view – but that means the controls have been simplified to the point where you might as well not be playing. Hammering B crawls, climbs, swings and jumps, but there's literally no way for Kong to die (we tried) or even lose Anne – we just stopped in one section and she wouldn't carry on running or screaming until we caught up.

The fighting's *slightly* better – there's more than one button – but it doesn't match up to the likes of *Spider-Man*, and is certainly not the WWE-style slugfest we were hoping for. And the tragic last section's too short: a quick dash around New York before the inevitable plummet off the Empire State building. But, contrary to what we might have said earlier, it turns out that there *is* in fact an alternative ending to the game – we're not saying Kong gets to marry Naomi Watts or anything, but it'll certainly outrage purists who sniff about the 1933 version being the 'definitive' one. But come on – after eight hours of stabbing grubs and being bitten by scorpions, who *doesn't* want to see a happy ending?

JOEL SNAPE

"THE SET PIECES WORK – THE BRONTOSAURUS'S RUN IS AN ABSOLUTE CORKER"



SAY WATTS?

Unlike Jackie-boy, Naomi Watts isn't the best looker we've ever seen in a game – she's got slightly gappy teeth, and isn't a patch on the real-life version. She's made of stern stuff, though: in this encounter she's attacked by half a dozen raptors and barely batted an eyelid when we raked them with machine-gun fire, somehow managing not to kill her. Naomi – we salute you.



- The setpieces are often amazing.
- A change from the usual run'n'gun stuff.

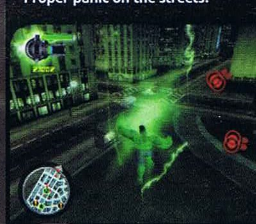


- Who'd have thought that being a giant killer monkey could be so dull?



IF YOU LIKE THIS...

INCREDIBLE HULK: ULTIMATE DESTRUCTION
Vivendi
NGC/110 79%
Proper panic on the streets.





8 VISUALS
Impeccable throughout, though relentlessly green.



9 SOUNDS
Excellent voice acting, growls and ripping roars.



9 MASTERY
Bright support characters and excellent dinos.



7 LIFESPAN
Eight hours with barely a hitch. The *film'll* be three...

VERDICT

Excellent, atmospheric stuff, hampered by the limitations of the film locations and some dull monkeying about.

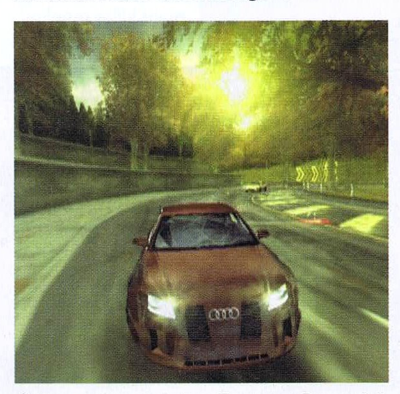
NGC



"Of course, racing isn't even really the point"



△ You can gaze at your fake polygonal car in the Showroom… that's enough now.



△ Remember when lens flare was the special effect *du jour*? Now it's 'bloom lighting'.



△ 'Pursuit Breaker' spots bring scenery down on the cops. But the police sometimes activate them themselves. Fools!



NEED FOR SPEED MOST WANTED

INFO BURST

PUBLISHER	EA
DEVELOPER	EA
RELEASE DATE	NOV 25
PLAYERS	1-2
MEM. CARD PAGES	9
GBA LINK-UP	NO
SURROUND SOUND	NO
WIDESCREEN	YES
COST	£40



Buckle up for police, speed cameras and action…

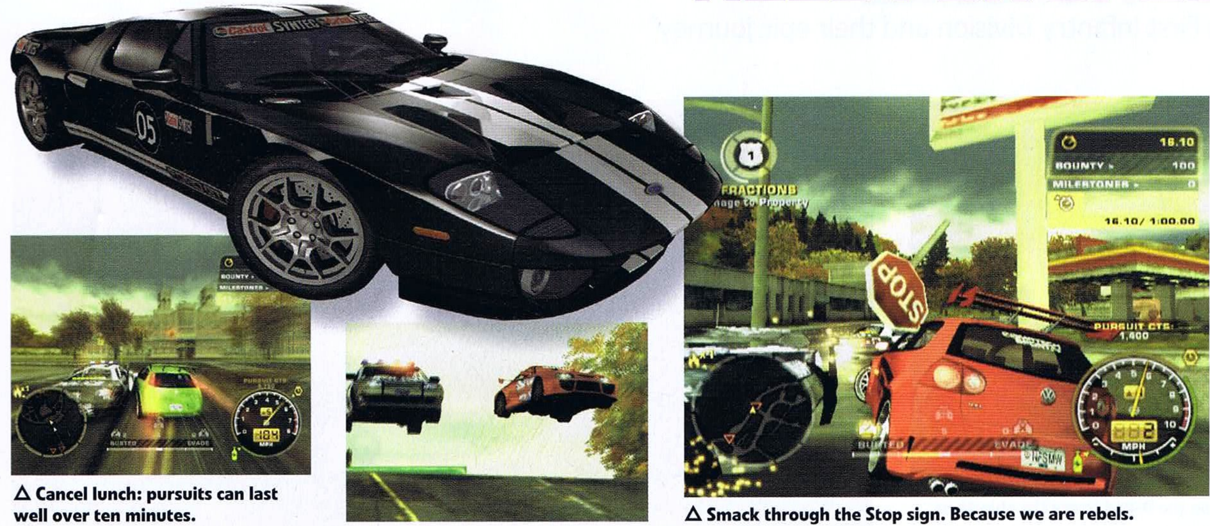


How they've done it is beyond us, but EA has managed to turn the simple job of driving a car on a road into something brain-scramblingly complicated. Totting up Cost To State while searching for a Pursuit Breaker and we've unintentionally completed a Milestone! Racking up the Bounty you need to overturn a rival's Marker but what does it all mean and what exactly is going on?

The stubborn determination to unsimplify everything makes *Need for Speed: Most Wanted* a hard game to fall in love with at first sight. "Tollbooth races" where you "collect a time-stamped card" and then "race between booths as fast as possible"? That'll be a checkpoint race, then. Even the cops use the word "infractions" to describe your crimes, the posh gits.

Yes, *cops*. *Most Wanted* brings the series' traditional police chases back out of retirement, and they're the kick up the exhaust the ailing franchise needed. Fleeing the filth and barging them into crash barriers offers nothing beyond what *Driver* and *Grand Theft Auto* were doing a good five years ago but it's brainless fun all the same. Chases involve up to eight wailing cars and you, while the good news is that the city's wide roads have been expertly designed for hectic 182mph pursuits.

The general feel trumps *Need for Speed's* usual mediocrity, too. Out goes the blinding garishness of *Underground*'s flickbook-framerated tracks; in comes a



△ Cancel lunch: pursuits can last well over ten minutes.

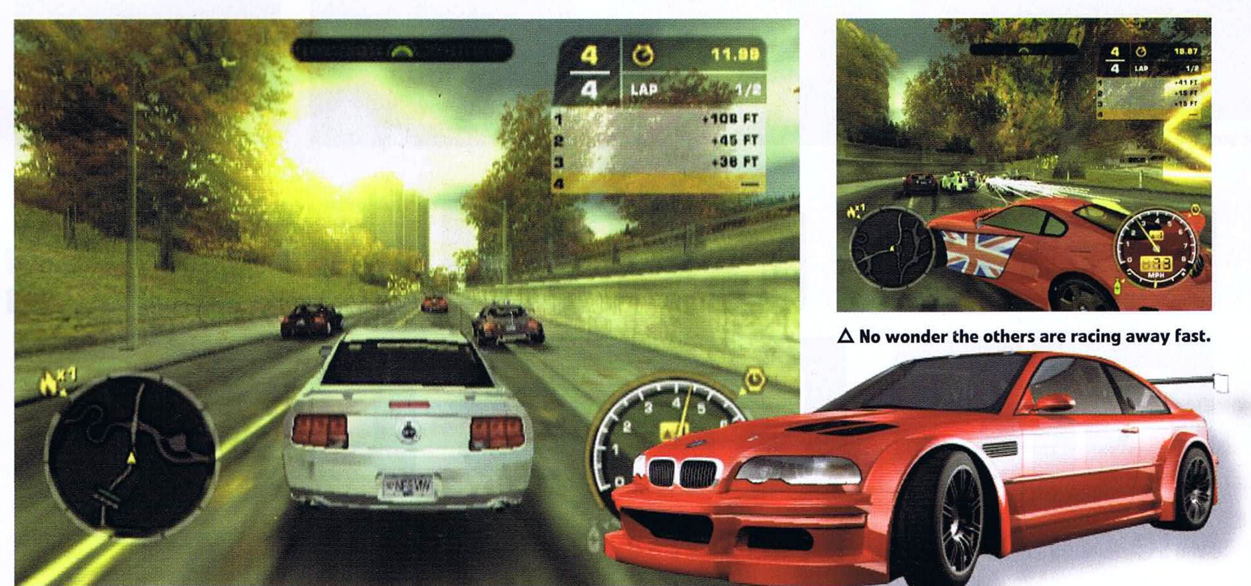
△ Smack through the Stop sign. Because we are rebels.



TRACK MEAT

Most Wanted is divided into 15 sets of challenges, each of which culminates in a race-off against one of your rivals. Beat him or her and you might – might – bag their car.





△ No wonder the others are racing away fast.

△ Competitors punish you for even the mildest of mistakes. We snapped a Wavebird in half.

faster, smoother, greener experience. Few complaints handling-wise, either, although we were gnawing our knuckles at how easy it is to spin out and end up facing the way you came, as well as rubbing our aching claw-hands after all that time spent holding down the R-trigger to accelerate.

The problem is that the new cop-fleeing focus only highlights how strangely soulless the straight racing is. We're big fans of some of *Most Wanted*'s new ideas, like the Speedtraps that challenge you to race through checkpoints faster than your rivals. But the cars with Gamecube at the wheel drive so artificially – braking to wave you past one corner, then boosting impossibly to leave you reading their rear numberplate the next – that you're often overcome by a lonely feeling of racing a track full of robot-brained weirdos.

Of course, racing isn't even really the *point* of *Need for Speed* – it's just a way of racking up the cash to pay for a new set of shock absorbers or to plaster a great big Union Jack all over the passenger door. *Most Wanted* is as jampacked with rims, trims, vinyls and paintjobs as its predecessors and, with performance upgrades, you can actually *feel* the oomph of a new engine and *hear* the roar of a new set of pistons. The customisation menu is one of EA's more user-friendly moments, too: a relief after the stodgy furniture-shopping hell of *The Sims 2*.

Need For Speed still isn't a patch on the teeth-clenching traffic dodging and heart-hammering speed of *Burnout 2*, and it doesn't deserve the inevitable Christmas top five slot. But, for once, we're left wanting more.

MARK GREEN



CUT IT OUT

The preposterous cutscenes in Most Wanted star 'real' actors. We use the world 'real' in its loosest sense: they can't act, and the key job requirement for the women is to be able to bend down while wearing low-cut tops. We laughed til we cried.

"YOU CAN FEEL THE OOMPH OF A NEW ENGINE AND HEAR THE ROAR OF NEW PISTONS"



- Fast and satisfying.
- Decent cop chases.
- Customisation overload.

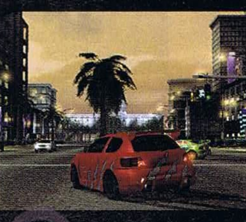


- Beaten by *Burnout*.
- Substandard rival AI.
- Self-consciously 'street'.



IF YOU LIKE THIS...

Burnout 2
Acclaim
NGC/80 90%
Blindingly fast in-your-face crashterpiece, this still beats *Need For Speed*.





6 VISUALS

Kinder on the eyes than *Underground*'s neon-drenched mess.



8 SOUNDS

Atmospheric police chatter and throaty engine noise.



6 MASTERY

Burnout's technical brilliance is a speck on the horizon.

8 LIFESPAN

Customisation coming out of its armpits and over 60 mini challenges.

VERDICT

The cops breathe life back into the series but, compared to *Burnout 2*, *Need for Speed: Most Wanted* is still lacking.



"America's First Infantry Division and their epic journey"



△ You have to press down on the D-pad to see the objectives.



△ Huge battlefield, but you can only walk on a small part of it.



△ Looks great, doesn't it? They certainly got the environments and weapons right.

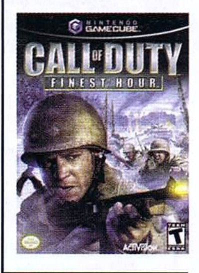






INFO BURST

PUBLISHER	ACTIVISION
DEVELOPER	GREY MATTER
RELEASE DATE	OUT NOW
PLAYERS	1
MEM. CARD PAGES	1
GBA LINK-UP	NO
SURROUND SOUND	YES
WIDESCREEN	YES
COST	£40



CALL OF DUTY 2: BIG RED ONE

The Yanks are winning WW2 all on their own. Again.



Anyone foolish enough to use Gamecube WW2 titles as the sole source of their historical research could be forgiven for believing that mankind's bloodiest conflict was fought entirely within the confines of corridors. No wonder so many people died – it must have been pretty hard to find cover and avoid incoming fire when invisible walls prevented you from running off and sensibly hiding in the hills.

There's clearly room in the market for a more free-roaming WW2 shooter that features *Freedom Fighters*-style squad commands and multiple routes through a campaign. And as things currently stand, *Call Of Duty 2: Big Red One* is as good as it gets. It's fast, it's furious, it looks great and the action never lets up for a moment. But despite ticking all the right boxes, it still feels very much like the precursor to something truly excellent rather than the main event. Apart from being a more than respectable shooter, it's one title that should make you excited about the next generation of consoles.

Unlike the previous *Call Of Duty*, *Big Red One* doesn't switch between different nationalities in different battlefields. Instead it focuses on America's First Infantry Division and their epic journey that took them from North Africa, onto the beaches of Italy and finally into Occupied Europe. That's enough action to fill a whole season of Gregory Peck movies, and with the focus solely on this one unit, you'd think the character development



TANKED UP

With weapons like this in the Allied armoury, it's a wonder the Germans didn't just roll to victory in Europe. They had chunky Panzers that look exactly like modern tanks; we made do with this rickety tin bucket that looks like the wheels are made of paperclips. Or maybe the game just doesn't do it justice...



△ Point-and-click destruction.



△ Gunning aboard a halftrack.

FIRE FIGHTING
How to survive a world at war…



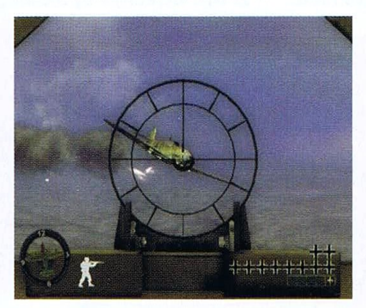
ROCKETS: *These German bazookas look impressive and make a huge bang, but they take forever to reload and you can only carry three spare rockets. Whip one of these out in a firefight and you're a fool. A dead fool.*



RELOAD: *You'll have to keep reloading your weapon every few bursts, but just don't do it when you're near a dead enemy. The reload button is the same one used as weapon swap, which can be very annoying indeed.*



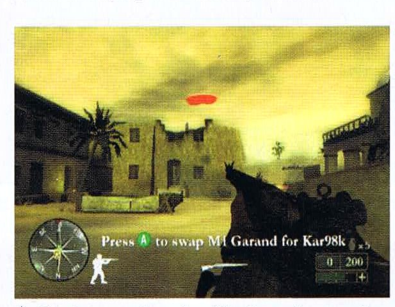
AIRBORNE: *Continuing the* Call Of Duty *tradition, one mission has you running from turret to turret following audio instructions as your lumbering bomber is attacked by wave after wave of enemy fighter planes.*



CHAOTIC: *Unfortunately, these turret-based sections go on too long. It gets dull after the first 20 kills and if you take too much damage, you'll need plenty of willpower to start the whole process all over again.*



△ **Looking down the barrel of something that'll turn people into meaty chunks.**



△ **Don't press the reload button when you're standing near a dropped weapon. Gah!**



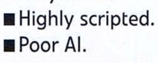
△ **Grab a fixed machine gun to defend the house from a swarm of German invaders.**



- Great weapons.
- Realistic scenery.
- Non-stop action.



- Very linear.
- Highly scripted.
- Poor AI.





IF YOU LIKE THIS…

Conflict: Desert Storm 2
SCI
NGC/86 90%
Superior war sim with squad commands and co-op gameplay.



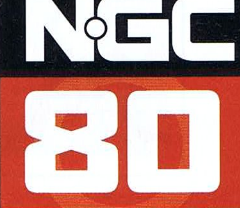
8 VISUALS
Nice scenery, loads of things blowing up everywhere.

7 SOUNDS
Standard gun noises, repetitive snippets of speech.

7 MASTERY
Technically solid, despite the lack of multiplayer modes.

6 LIFESPAN
It's relatively short and lacking in replay value.

VERDICT
A basic but enjoyably frantic shooter that ticks all of the usual WW2 boxes with considerable flair.



GOD MODE
Our favourite parts of the game are when you get to pop unsuspecting enemies half a mile away with the sniper rifle. However, 'friendly fire' incidents, be they accidental or deliberate, are simply not allowed to happen. We tried.



would be significantly fuller. But what you actually get is essentially a polished version of last year's game, with different scenarios and better graphics.

Despite being only occasionally set in actual corridors, it's still so completely linear that it plays at times just like a shooting gallery. Germans pop up from predictable hiding places… all you do is tag them with your targeting cursor before they can fire back.

Artificial intelligence is extremely limited, so you'll never find yourself being surprised by enemies who react to your tactics, and exactly the same things happen whenever you replay a mission, making repeated play-throughs of completed levels disturbingly close to a simple memory test.



BONUS GOODIES
Completing a mission unlocks concept art and info about historical weaponry. Disappointingly, this is all just static artwork when we'd have preferred more lingering looks at the incredibly detailed 3D models from the game itself. Not that we're gun nuts or anything, of course.

Fortunately, it's possible to alter the difficulty level each time you restart, and this commendable brand of user-friendliness helps *Big Red One* stand out from the usual WW2 game template. So while it's often little more than a posh firing range, with its varied, quick-fire mission objectives and constant conveyor belt of enemy cannon fodder, it's still surprisingly satisfying to play.

> **"IT'S FAST, IT'S FURIOUS, IT LOOKS GREAT AND THE ACTION NEVER LETS UP"**

You'll have to lay down covering fire, shoot down aircraft, pick off enemy snipers, deliver emergency medical aid, fix bombs to tanks and defend buildings from swarms of soldiers – often within the space of a single mission. The levels may be short, but they're all so completely packed, it's quite easy to forget that you don't have any say in how or when you complete them. Only the odd tedious stint inside a gun turret spoils the expertly tuned pace.

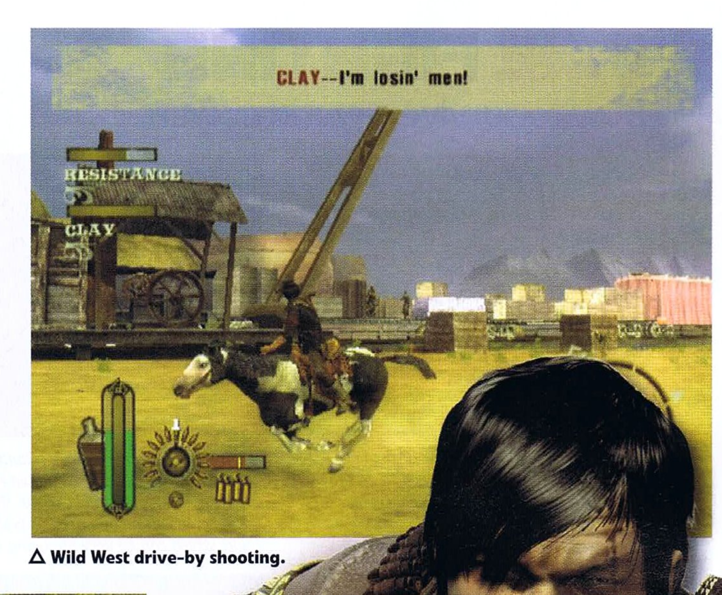
While replay value may be somewhat limited, there's plenty of sweaty-palmed, death-dealing fun to be had while it lasts. Recommended.

MARTIN KITTS

"Outlaws visibly lose chunks of skull"



△ Dodge City's cowboys are already ugly, even before you punch holes in their faces.



△ Wild West drive-by shooting.

△ Man's best friend? Eat lead, wolfie!



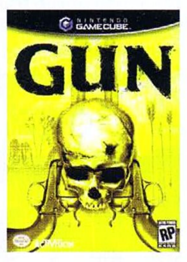
△ Nice tassles. Very Village People...

GUN

Where have all the cowboys gone? Right here as it turns out...



PUBLISHER	ACTIVISION
DEVELOPER	NEVERSOFT
RELEASE DATE	NOV 25
PLAYERS	1
MEM. CARD PAGES	7
GBA LINK-UP	NO
SURROUND SOUND	NO
WIDESCREEN	YES
PRICE	£40





This ain't no rootin'-tootin' Hollywood-style Wild West cowboy thigh-slap, no sirree. Not with outlaws visibly losing entire chunks of skull to a well-placed bullet. Or our 'hero' using a civilian as a human shield before arbitrarily taking a knife to the poor guy's neck – then scalping him. And don't even talk to us about shooting horses.

Gun is, in short, pretty nasty from start to finish. It kicks off brutally with a handful of bear-blasting, American Indian-slicing introductory missions, just to get those vengeful juices flowing. Then a massive open-plan desert of violent 1880's lawlessness opens up for you to roam across and kill things. Sure there's a fixed timeline of main quests driving Colton White's hunt for his real dad but you're free to giddy-up to the towns scattered around the map, visit traders who have inexplicably set up shop in the middle of empty desert, hunt down wanted varmints, play

> "IT ALL ENDS UP WITH BLOOD SQUIRTING LIKE SILLY STRING"

△ Ah, the open plains… bo-ring.



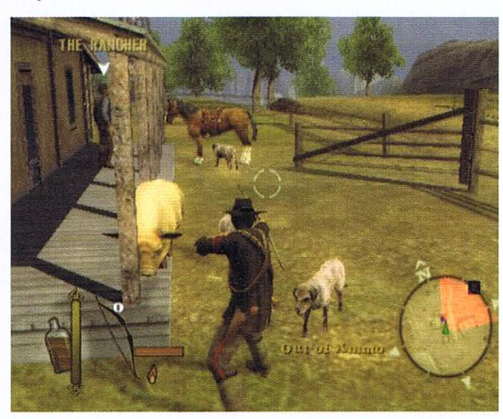


WILD AT HEART

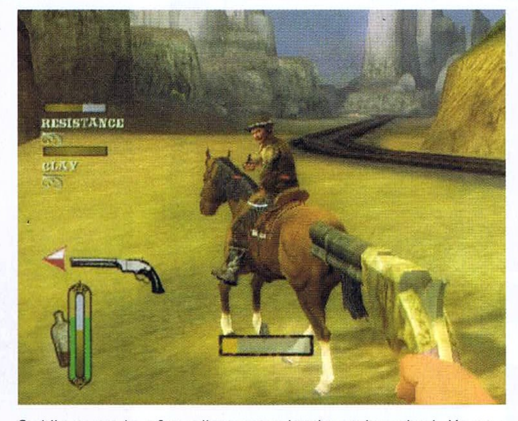
Be a card-playin', bear-knifin', hooker slicin' outlaw.



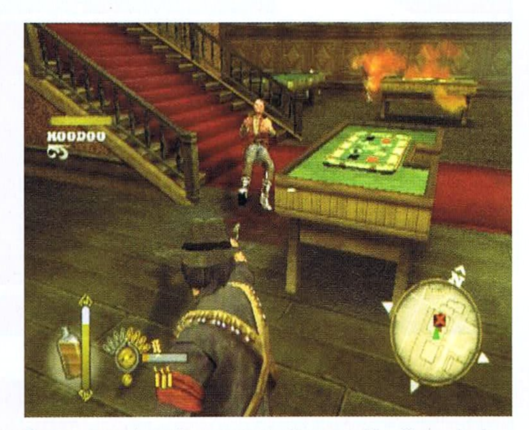
Among the many ill-advised ideas crammed into Gun, this pencil-sketch Poker screen – with CPU players getting new faces scribbled in as you play – is one of the worst.



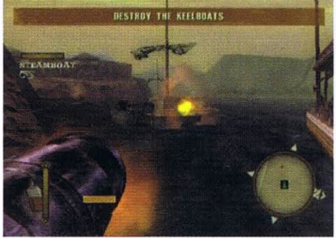
There are animals all over the shop in Gun. You can amuse yourself by pointlessly tormenting wild pigs and dogs, or make a Native American happy by kicking in a white wolf.



Saddle up pardner for galloping gun battles on horseback. You can use QuickDraw to knock enemies off their horses, but we prefer the hit 'n' run school of rootin' tootin' horse rammin'.



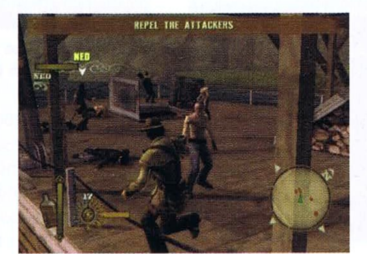
Everyone attacks and it turns into a bar room blitz. If you play it Neversoft's way (leaning out from behind barriers, copious use of QuickDraw), it works well. If you don't, it's a mess.



△ Yet another big cannon finale.



△ Up a creek, with a paddle (steamer).



△ Plenty of people to meet, then kill.



△ His teeth will soon be your necklace.

poker, or simply shoot buffalo before trampling prostitutes under hoof. Whatever you choose to do, it all ends pretty much the same way anyway: blood squirting about the shop like silly string.

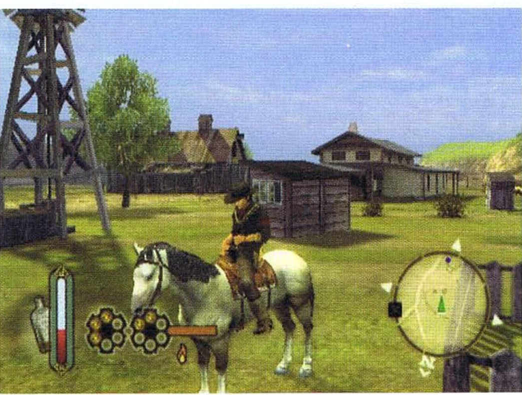
Still, *Gun* really isn't the Wild West *Grand Theft Auto* we were hoping for. For one thing, the map – which is mostly frontier-era desert after all – is almost empty, making it feel more like a horribly stretched-out version of your average RPG town. Plus, 'driving' between locations is no fun at all: riding a horse offers only half as much fun as the benchmark videogame equestrian experience (Epona in *Zelda: Ocarina of Time*), probably because horsey actually keels over and dies if you rev his turbo button too often.

When you find something to do, there *is* fun in *Gun*. There's a simplicity to the missions – "Saddle up and gun that peskin' Turner gang back to the Badlands!" is about the extent of it – that makes this a decent disc for brain-off, trigger finger-on gaming. Plus, every



STAR SCRIPT

***Mask of Zorro* screenwriter Randall Jahnson pens the cutscenes that Hollywood actors voice. Shame really, since you're bound to skip past them just like you would on any other game.**



△ Giving your horse a rest is a must, or it becomes an ex-horse.



MO' SLOW

There must be an EU directive that makes slow-motion bullet time effects compulsory in 21st century videogames. Gun's is more integrated into the action than most – at the press of the B Button, you're given a limited amount of first-person QuickDraw slow-mo action that's absolutely crucial given how many cowboys gun for you at once. Then it runs out: and the sticky third-person aiming makes combat a living nightmare. Incidentally, this gimmicky effect is used cleverly just once: for shooting arrows out of the sky.





△ Dual Peacemakers: for when you *really* need some peace.



△ The missions range across miles of empty desert.



△ Completing the missions will line your pockets with deadly lead.

completed mission bumps up your stats, RPG-style, and earns you money for gun upgrades and the infamous scalping knife –so there's a real incentive to hunt out odd jobs.

But even though *Gun* rides happily into do-your-own-thing territory – so far, in fact, that it even goes a bit *Harvest Moon* with gold-mining and fishing sidequests – our spines remained untingled throughout. The game as a whole feels like one massively extended training mission, a long series of samey gun battles, clumsily executed. There's the feeling that there *must* be some big, exciting stuff around the corner. It's just that there never is.

Gun's ropey, held-together-with-sellotape feel is even more noticeable when the bullets start flying. It's third-person gunslinging at its worst: the C-stick aiming is all over the shop (criminally,

GO WEST...

... for life is peaceful and there's plenty of space. Especially for the bloke trying to sell stuff in the middle of nowhere.

■ Welcome to the most remote shop since *Resi 4*. This American Indian trading post doesn't attract much passing trade, but does do a good line in scalpin' knives.

■ Dodge City is where you'll go for Poker games, shopping, and the odd crazy shootout that the sheriff will almost certainly turn a blind eye to.

■ There's gold in them thar hills. Within these mines, we also found a horse with half its body trapped in the walls. We called it the Rock Horse.

■ The desert in *Gun* is clearly modelled on Monument Valley, Arizona, immortalised in numerous John Ford Westerns.

Δ Why move it? Isn't the point of a cannon to fire it from afar?

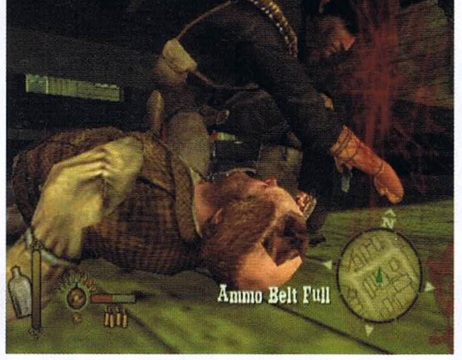
RAMPAGE

Shoot, maim or 'horse' too many townsfolk and the entire population will rise up against you. There's no reward for brutally killing the understandably miffed villagers: other than the warm feeling of a job well done.

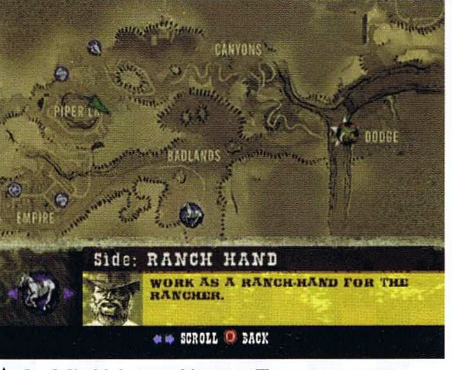




Δ More jaw than, er, Jaws.



Δ Another scalp for the collection. Heads we win…



Δ See? Six blobs on a big map. The rest – empty.

there's no lock-on), and dodging even a single bullet is too much for Mr White. In fact, Colton only breaks into his snail-paced interpretation of a 'sprint' if you push the stick dead forward. Otherwise he prefers an agonizingly slow trot, even when he's building up an impressive collection of flaming arrows all down his back. You get the sense the developers – best known for *Tony Hawk* – aren't sure how to handle a character who isn't on a skateboard.

Your enemies are an embarrassment, too. They'll stand like statues on top of buildings until you stroll by, or walk happily into blazing furniture infernos and then run around screaming like they're surprised to be on fire. The animation is just *appalling*, as well. There are some decent moments – we almost broke into applause



HERE'S TO YOUR HEALTH

There's an interesting health system in Gun. When you're about to tumble into the arms of the Reaper, you can swig from a bottle of whisky and replenish your health. Good idea? No. If you forget or don't have time to down the drink, you die – even though you essentially had plenty of health left. Oh, Neversoft…

when a horse executed a particularly good roly-poly after getting shot – but the jarring motion, grainy graphics and 200+ shades of brown give *Gun* the look of an unspectacular Nintendo 64 game. Even the physics have an old-school feel, with TNT barrels bouncing around like water balloons. And seriously: Bullet Time? Again?

Gun seems self-aware enough to realise that not even a script penned by a Hollywood veteran will sustain your interest through this mess. The game ends up desperately throwing set-pieces at you: we counted five separate times we had to straddle some kind of cannon aimed at men in stetsons. And, even these sections are as distinctly amateurish as the rest of the game.

Neversoft should get back to what they do best: geriatric blokes sliding down railings on a surfboard with wheels. *Gun* is the kind of idea that probably sounded great on paper but that ends up making frontier America seem like a very dull place to be indeed. All told, it's about as much fun as a hole in the skull.

MARK GREEN

"THERE'S THE FEELING THERE MUST BE SOME BIG, EXCITING STUFF AROUND THE CORNER"



- Pretty landscapes.
- A handful of interesting missions.
- Flaming arrows.



- Pretty empty landscape.
- Stodgy, clumsy combat.
- Embarrassing animation.



TRUE CRIME
Activision
NGC/88 75%
Grand Theft Auto wannabe where you're on the right side of the law.





8 VISUALS

Party like it's 1999! Ropey animation and just too much brown.



8 SOUNDS

Best summed up by the intrusive horse slap noise.



8 MASTERY

The world is impressively huge, yet poorly polished.

8 LIFESPAN

Even with side missions, the outlaw life gets samey fast.

VERDICT

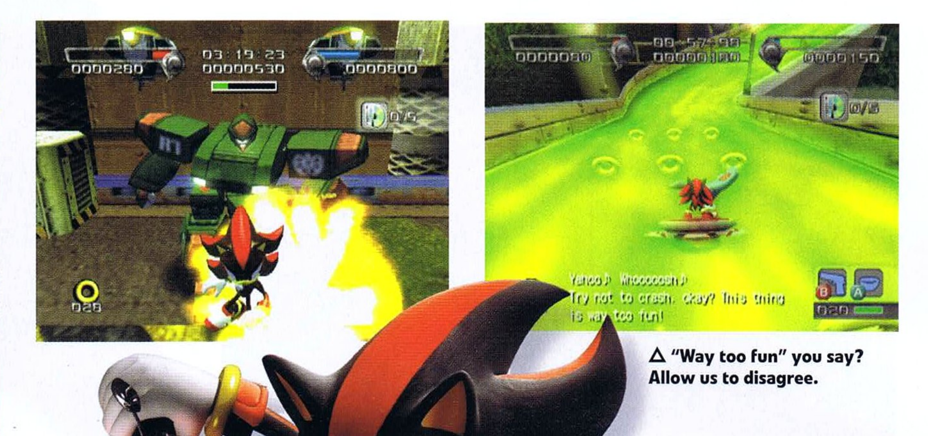
Too much of the bad and the ugly, not enough of the good. *Gun* seems to lose interest in itself well before sundown.



"Shadow is the yin to Sonic's yang"



△ In true *Sonic* fashion, speed is everything.



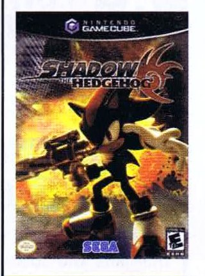
△ "Way too fun" you say? Allow us to disagree.



△ It's all about chaos emeralds, kind of like Shadow bling.

INFO BURST

PUBLISHER	SEGA
DEVELOPER	SEGA
RELEASE DATE	OUT NOW
PLAYERS	1
MEM. CARD PAGES	3
GBA LINK-UP	NO
SURROUND SOUND	NO
WIDESCREEN	NO
COST	£35



SHADOW THE HEDGEHOG

This hog wants to pull the trigger until it goes 'click'.



Over the years, Nintendo has been highly successful at creating successful spin-off titles based on supporting characters. In the last few years alone we've had *Luigi's Mansion*, the *Wario Ware* games, *Yoshi Touch & Go* and, just around the corner, Princess Peach is taking off her tracksuit and getting ready for her first solo outing on DS.

In contrast to this impressive output, Sega has never really exploited its B-list characters, preferring to come up with new concepts like *Billy Hatcher*, the boy who loved eggs. Obviously they've seen the light as one of Sonic's buddies takes centre stage. Strangely though, they've picked the one friend who looks exactly the same as Sonic.

Shadow is the yin to Sonic's yang, the south to his north, the bun to his hot dog. We know this because while Sonic is all about running really fast and "Gee Whizz" enthusiasm, Shadow is more preoccupied with brooding about his mysterious past before shooting people in the face. You heard that right. Shooting people… with guns. And to think Sonic used to be such a cute little franchise.

Shadow is on a mission. To do what, we're not exactly sure, as the story was a little vague. Suffice to say there's a girl involved, there are chaos emeralds to be collected, baddies are everywhere, and if any of those mofo's so much as moves, then Shadow will execute every last one of them. He's got a tight little arsenal of weaponry available, ranging from the smallest of pistols to huge chain guns seemingly ripped off the side of a helicopter. Every enemy that you take out drops a weapon, and though you can only hold one at a time, any of them can be used.

But who are we killing? Well, that depends on you. Each level has three missions to complete, a good one, a bad one, and an ugly one. Sorry, neutral, not ugly. The neutral objectives are usually "Get to the exit quickly", the good ones usually involve killing so many baddies and the bad ones usually involve killing a similar number of goodies. You have a good/bad



GRAND THEFT HEDGEHOG

Because Shadow's so cool, he can 'borrow' the various vehicles, from sports cars to motorbikes. But since Shadow can actually outrun all of them, their inclusion in the game is entirely pointless. D'oh!

WORD UP

Every level features a cameo from a famous Sonic character.



Knuckles! Everyone's favourite echidna appears on the ruins level. His main abilities are climbing, fighting, and laying eggs with leathery shells. Mmmm, eggs.



Sonic! Faster than a speeding bullet, he's hip, he's funny, he's blue. Obsessed with milk, he's always snuffling his way into trouble with Dr Eggman! Mmmm, eggs.



A Bee! No-one knows who he is or how he blagged his way in. He hangs around pretending to be part of Sonic's gang. The videogame equivalent of Sadie Frost.



△ You've just got to love the dreadlocky hair.









△ Jump, shoot, jump, shoot. Repeat until bored...

△ He 'chutes, he scores. Get the drop on your foes.



△ Hard-boiled villain cracks awful yolks.

meter at the top of the screen, and filling either will let you use a chaos power. Fill the bad for a huge explosion, fill the good to warp to the next checkpoint. It's confusing in practice since it's hard to distinguish good from bad. Hey – they're all shooting at you.

Disappointingly, there's a lot wrong with this game. There are plenty of traditional loop-the-loops yet your constant need to shoot stops you getting enough speed up. There's no targeting system to speak of either, so you're often wasting ammo on empty space. Deaths are frequently unfair, and having to restart the level after five deaths is an unwelcome throwback to a more unforgiving time. It's also so short, you can see the end credits within two or three hours. Sadly not the Glock-buster Sega was hoping for, *Shadow the Hedgehog* is unfortunately doomed to go down in Sega's history book as a terrible misfire.

JON HAMBLIN

> **"EACH LEVEL HAS THREE MISSIONS TO COMPLETE - GOOD, BAD OR NEUTRAL"**



△ You can't actually kill soldiers, only knock them down like old ladies slipping on icy pavements.



- It's sort of a new Sonic game, yay!
- Some small sections are okay. Sort of.



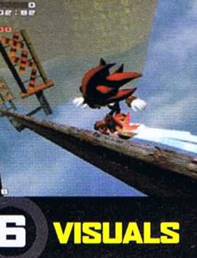
- Frustrating to play.
- Shadow's a really bland character.
- Guns all feel samey.



IF YOU LIKE THIS...

Sonic Adventure 2: Battle
Sega
NGC/65 72%
A bit messy, but packed with *Sonic* goodness. Lets you run really fast. Wheee!









6 VISUALS

Occasionally pretty, mostly dull. Explosions are weak.





5 SOUNDS

Filled with cheesy '80s-style rawk music. Not cool.



4 MASTERY

Manages to muff it all up chronically. Terrible.

3 LIFESPAN

Very short game. Lots to unlock, but you probably won't bother.

VERDICT

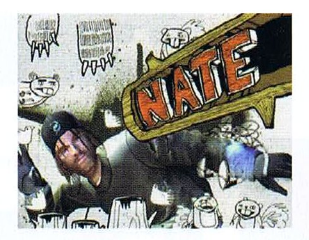
Just... no. Sonic with guns is a rubbish idea, badly executed. About as street as your mum, and twice as ugly. Avoid.

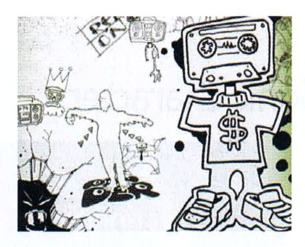


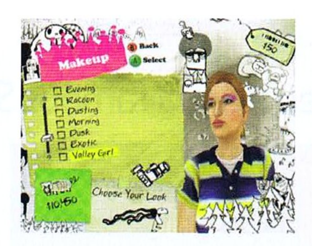


NGC 51

"Engaging downhill skid-a-thon"







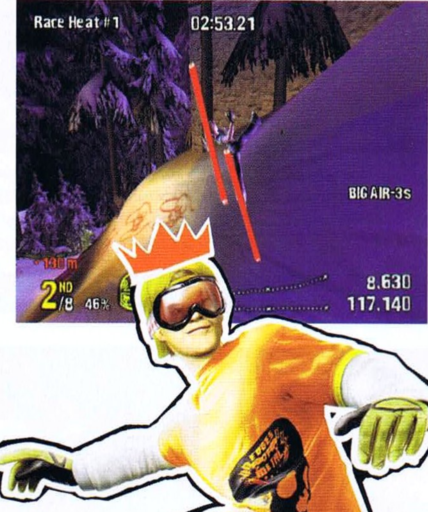




△ There's a fair amount of mid-air trickery.



△ It's your usual racing and competing...





△ Some familiar faces crop up in the game...



- Slick tricks and monster air.
- Lots of satisfying (if generic) challenges.



- Skis feel similar to snowboards.
- Controls are tricky for newcomers.



IF YOU LIKE THIS...

1080° Avalanche
Nintendo
NGC/89, 90%
Small but perfectly formed solid racing experience – for the discerning gamer.



8 VISUALS
Moves quickly. Slopes are wide-open and full of ramps.

7 SOUNDS
Mostly guitar stuff, with a handful of decent dance tunes.

7 MASTERY
Doesn't push the Cube, but it's surely keeping it busy.

8 LIFESPAN
Well over 100 challenges, which get harder than walls.

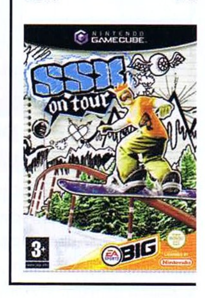
VERDICT
It's enjoyable, demanding and satisfying, in much the same way as *SSX 3*. Too much, maybe.





INFO BURST

PUBLISHER	EA
DEVELOPER	EA
RELEASE DATE	OUT NOW
PLAYERS	1-2
MEM. CARD PAGES	4
GBA LINK-UP	NO
SURROUND SOUND	YES
WIDESCREEN	YES
COST	£40





SSX ON TOUR

Another downhill session, but is it a winner?

The *SSX* series is one that's been given a rare grace by the EA update machine. It has been two years since *SSX 3*, a game that was more than likeable, so we're intrigued to see what this holiday-of-sorts has done for the franchise. Is it refreshed and revitalised? Did it bring us back some presents? Not really, no, but we're still glad to see it.

On Tour sees *SSX* jiggling about within the groove it established with *SSX 3*, not changing anything fundamental but still remaining fun to play. The biggest addition to the brilliantly OTT trick-based snowboarding action is the option to use skis instead of a board. It gives your character access to a series of different tricks to that of a snowboard – different in name and appearance, if not that different in execution. Skis are a ride that's slightly less smooth than boarding, too, but then you can zip down a monster incline facing completely the wrong way, if you like travelling through life arse-first.

> **"YOU CAN ZIP DOWN FACING THE WRONG WAY, IF YOU LIKE TRAVELLING ARSE-FIRST"**

The game's thrills are familiar – as familiar as its controls, which must still be the most complex around for a newcomer to pick up – but are a rush. They offer the kind of air that Tony Hawk could only achieve if he grew a propeller out of the end of his nose. Relax into those controls, a set-up that needs both analogue sticks, D-pad and most of the face buttons, and the tricks come as thick and fast as the dizzying jumps. And nailing some of the later challenges on offer – there's a lot to see, do and unlock, as with *SSX 3* – is an enjoyable uphill struggle.

It's still a worthy and engaging downhill skid-a-thon, but one whose goodness reminds us all too much of the awesome *SSX 3*.

STEVEN BAILEY



Mobile Games
MIDNIGHT POKER
Once you're at the table, there's no room for joking around. Your opponents will use their ultra-realistic artificial intelligence to wipe out your savings in no time, if you let them do it! All the characteristics of a real Texas Hold'em game have been included in this ultra-realistic simulation created by true Poker lovers.
Play 50
FOUR FOUR TWO TRIVIA QUIZ
FourFourTwo Trivia Quiz offers you the chance to test your knowledge in the ultimate football quiz on mobile! Start off with the National Cup. Winning this title will unlock the European Cup, and a victory at the European cup will unlock the International Cup! Are you up for the challenge!
Play 44
WAR OF THE WORLDS
War of the Worlds consists of 13 levels of pure shooting action in 5 different environments inspired by the film and its universe. You will marvel at the amazing graphics depicting Osaka, London, and New York as they are overcome by the tripods. In order to maximize your score, you must destroy as much as possible.
Play 47
MIDNIGHT POOL
Midnight Pool™ brings you into the competitive universe of a genuine American pool hall. You will face 8 original players, none of whom are ever at a loss for words! Choose from 3 available characters, then unlock the others in Tournament mode, where you can play with the rule set of your preference.
Play 39
ASPHALT URBAN GT
Asphalt: Urban GT™ takes you out on 8 tracks inspired by genuine places. Each track is part of a specific graphic universe and includes different tunnels and elevations that enable you to perform impressive jumps, among other things ... But watch out! Don't get flashed or stopped by the police.
Play 36
SPLINTER CELL CHAOS THEORY
For the first time in the Splinter Cell series for mobile phones, you can use brand new weapons to confront your enemies, like Knives, Drones, Grenades - and your enemies even have sniffer dogs to track you down in the dark!
Play 41
MIDNIGHT BOWLING
Besides the authentic spirit of the game, Midnight Bowling takes you to all of the hottest bowling alleys, from Star Light to Ocean Alley. Each time you'll discover a different but alluring setting. Exceptional gameplay, including the exclusive spin control: even after you've thrown the ball, guide it right towards a strike!
Play 52
NEW YORK NIGHTS
"New York Nights is a new kind of simulation game, with funny and unexpected situations. Thanks to its intuitive gameplay, for the first time on your mobile phone you can live and interact in New York: do bodybuilding, go to a concert, even dance in a nightclub!
Play 40
MASSIVE SNOW BOARDING
Massive Snowboarding allows you race on the worlds most famous downhill tracks. With state of the art 3D graphics and fantastic gameplay we promise you'll find it very hard to put that phone down. Plenty of tracks and characters to chosse from with a banging soundtrack.
Play 53
SEXY POKER 2004
Play saucy strip poker whenever you want... Animated using brilliant artificial intelligence, your sensual partners take great pleasure in adding a little fantasy to your mobile. But watch out, these girls aren't easy and they all have strong personalities.
Play 10
MEDIEVAL COMBAT
Medieval Combat offers perfect gameplay and favors spectacular attacks: destroy parts of your adversary's armor in order to deliver increasingly deadly blows. The more you hit your opponent, the more you increase your magic gauge, to the point where you can unleash a devastating fury!
Play 49
2005 REAL FOOTBALL
2005 Real Football features realistic and extremely detailed animations (dribbling, scissor kicks etc), and captures the ambiance of a real match! These features, combined with graphics based on authentic 3D models, intuitive gameplay and improved artificial intelligence, make 2005 Real Football the leader in football games.
Play 43
To order a single game text the Item Code to 60111
eg. to order Asphalt Urban GT text Play 36 to 60111
£4.50 each
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IAN 'THE MACHINE' FREEMAN
UFC Veteran
ANTON VAN THOMAS
Wing Chun Master
ATTACK3
MICHAEL WONG
Tai Chi Combat
MARTIAL ARTS SCHOOL
ATTACK5
NEIL ADAMS
British Olympian MBE
Brtish National Olympic Team coach Neil Adams MBE shows you effective Judo techniques that work in real life situations. No fancy moves here - just real methods that could save your life.
Some of the techniques shown: How to defend yourself and attack when the fight goes to the ground. Brazilian Jiu Jitsu World Champion shows you how its all done.
Cage Rage Mixed Martial Arts
ATTACK4
DAVE O'DONNEL
This is your amazing chance to get up close and personal with some of the best martial artists from around the world, don't miss it..
Full colour and sound demonsration videos, showing effective street techiques. Learn what each art has to offer against various forms of attacks. All techniques are shown from numerous angles in slow speed with detailed instructions for easy learning. All the videos are taught in English for easy learning.
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"Gets its claws into you"



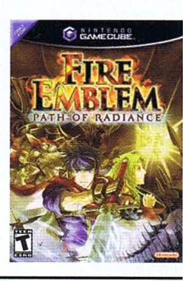
△ The range of locations help give a real sense of journey.

FIRE EMBLEM PATH OF RADIANCE

The RPG that favours brains over brawn really hits the spot.



PUBLISHER	NINTENDO
DEVELOPER	INTELLIGENT SYSTEMS
PLAYERS	1
MEM. CARD PAGES	19
GBA LINK-UP	YES
SURROUND SOUND	NO
WIDESCREEN	NO
PRICE	£35





Admittedly it's an acquired taste, but there's something about the painfully slow growth of character statistics that can really suck you into a game. Hours pass like minutes, a quick afternoon's play runs through the evening into the wee-small hours of the morning.

Watching those precious little numbers rise incrementally, from a twelve to thirteen, an eight to a nine, might not seem like the most riveting of pastimes – and we can imagine some of you will take some convincing on this matter – but take our word for it, once *Fire Emblem* gets its claws into you, all those seemingly trivial stats really begin to mean something to you. A seemingly weak new recruit growing into an invaluable part of your battle plans, perhaps, or the slow dawning of a time when a unit can be promoted, broadening the horizons of their potential power. Sure, it might be based on cold, numerical values, but *Fire Emblem* manages to humanise all the number crunching. It makes you *care*.

The game kicks off with a beautifully animated cutscene. Ike, lead character and son of a mercenary, is sparring with his father. In typical RPG fashion, he's young, naive and headstrong, with a lot to learn. Together with his little sister and a small band of veteran mercenaries, they eke out a living taking out troublesome barbarians on behalf of local villagers. It's one such mission that kicks off Ike's

> **"FIRE EMBLEM SOMEHOW MANAGES TO HUMANISE ALL THE NUMBER CRUNCHING"**



△ Make sure you use structural features to your advantage.



△ Enclosed spaces inject a welcome change of pace.

CHARACTER BUILDING

From little acorns...



You'll recruit some units automatically while others you have to talk to on the battlefield in order to get them on side. All of them vary greatly in power and usefulness.



It's tempting to let your stronger units just smash through the opposition, but it's wiser to soften up the enemy so that weaker characters can kill them off and gain more EXP.



As you progress, your army will swell substantially so you won't be able to field them all at the same time. Choosing which units to use before battle is part of the strategy.



Fortunately, winning battles gives you bonus EXP that you can spend on units between battle. This enables you to boost weaker units that didn't even take part in the combat.



At Lv20, certain stats will be maxed out and units will need to be promoted. When this happens, the growth rate of units accelerates – making them very powerful indeed.



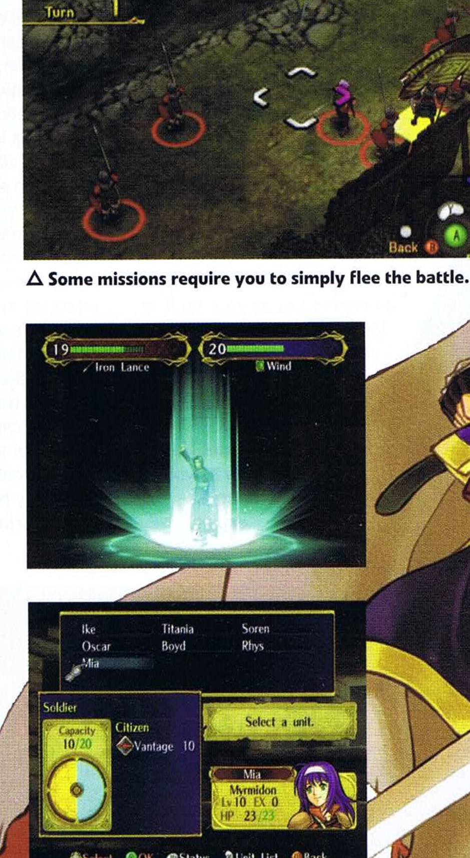
△ **Some units are mighty from the beginning.**



△ **Your weapons degrade over time, so don't get caught out.**



△ **Don't let your stronger units hog all the EXP.**



△ **Some missions require you to simply flee the battle.**

initiation as a warrior and naturally this forms the basis of the game's tutorial. You're taught the cyclical, scissors-paper-stone nature of the turn-based battle system (where certain weapons and magic, have the upper hand of others), the basics of movement and so forth.

Battles are fought on a grid of squares over various landscapes – forests, beaches, dungeons, forts, castles and so on. Each character has one turn per phase and once every party member has moved and attacked, it's the turn of the enemy to do likewise. Usually you're tasked to wipe out the enemy entirely but some missions demand that you survive a set number of turns, while others command you to fight your way an escape point. One thing that remains constant

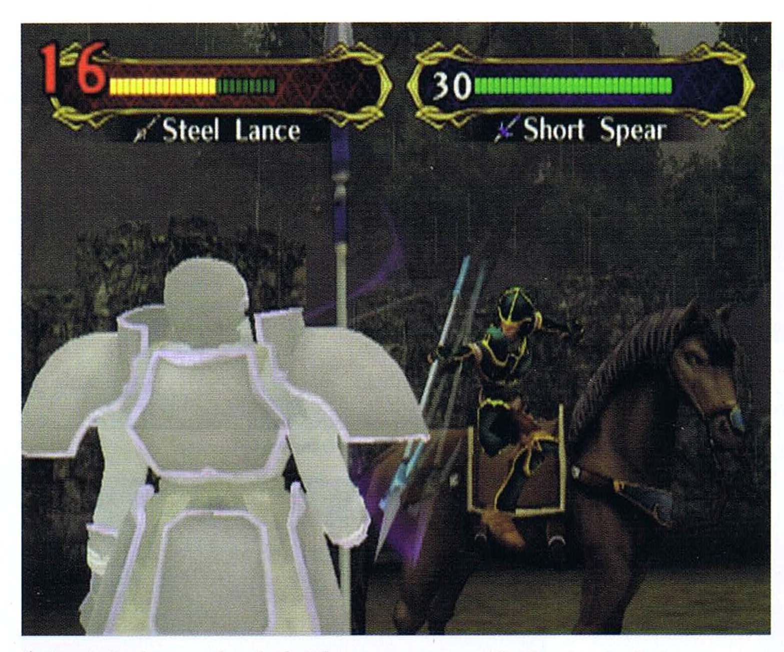


GBA LINK

As we pointed out in our import review* Path of Radiance *has a GBA link-up feature which, at the time, we didn't know how to work. As it turns out, once you finish the game, you can unlock extra content by sticking a copy of either* Fire Emblem *or* Sacred Stones *into your GBA and linking it up to your Gamecube.



"You really have to think"



Mounted units are unique in that they can move even after they've attacked.



Mages are weak against physical attacks, but dangerous from afar.



Use an inappropriate weapon against an enemy and you'll miss.



It's rare to find a story so well told, with such well-rounded characters.

throughout is that you must carefully consider your strategies. You need to create sturdy battle lines with your stronger units soaking up damage and protecting the more delicate support units of magic users and ranged attackers. Move your units intelligently so the correct units engage the enemy. Time your advances to out-flank them, or stay rooted to the spot and hold your ground. You really have to think about what you're attacking, how, when and why.

Send a unit out on its own and you can pretty much bet that they won't make it out of the battle alive. Pit the wrong weapon against the wrong enemy and not only will you fail to make much of an impression on their armour but, more often than not, the returning blow will make quite an impression on your skull. In later stages especially the enemy has a nasty habit of doing exactly what you hoped they wouldn't, exploiting your weaknesses as quickly as you're trying to exploit theirs. Make no mistake, *Fire Emblem* can be quite a challenge.

"SEND A UNIT OUT ON ITS OWN AND YOU CAN BET THEY WON'T MAKE IT BACK ALIVE"

However, unlike other turn-based strategy games, you don't have an endless supply of characters to call upon. The members of the army you begin with, then subsequently recruit, stay with you throughout the game. Some are weaker than others of course, but all can be raised through EXP gained from attacking and defeating enemies and all are vulnerable against certain enemy units. Lose them in battle and you won't see them again for the rest of the game.

Which can be devastating in a number of ways. Levelling up each unit is a real labour of love so losing any hurts, while the loss of any important items they're



Battle animations can be turned off to speed up the flow of combat.



A devastating critical strike at the right moment can win a battle.

CAT FIGHT

Part of the story revolves around the Laguz – a half human, half beast race that can transform into animals. While in 'human' form they're unable to attack, but once in beast form (a transition that happens over a number of turns) they can deal out masses of damage.



FIRE EMBLEM: POR

Kill to build a better army

BATTLE SCHOOL

Mastered the basics? There's a whole lot more to learn…

You can clear some missions by escaping from the battle. Let's learn how!

■ There's so much to the battle system that it's impossible to explain it all in the course of battle. A huge archive of tutorials guides you through the tricky stuff.

Since Ike is such a big glory hog, I'll let this fellow here show us how it's done.

■ This exhaustive library explains certain nuances in the system, like how some weapons can give bonus damage against certain unit types or some characters perform better fighting alongside others.



△ Most levels have a strong 'boss' to take out at the end.

△ Magic is used through books.

△ Knights are particularly weak to magic.





△ Visit houses for conversations and items.

△ A wide overview of a battlefield.

carrying is permanent, which can really hinder your game plan. It's hard not to get attached to each and every member of your party because the game invests plenty of time and effort fleshing them out, giving them back stories and elaborating on an individual's relationship with members of the team. These fellas just ooze personality and there's plenty of dialogue to read, from the skits which take place between battles to skippable conversations that bulk up your knowledge of the game world. In some ways, immersing yourself in this side of the game often feels as engaging as the battles themselves.

These chats also help you to overlook some of the game's presentational shortcomings. The dialogue is presented with some really lovely characters portraits (something that we've all come to expect from *Fire Emblem*), while the stills that accompany some phases of plot development and the brilliant cel-shaded cutscenes are truly sumptuous.

This is all in stark contrast to the character models and animations of the battles themselves. While the locations and environments are nice enough, not *that* much effort has gone into the actual cut and thrust of battle. The animations are crude and the battlefield character models, particularly the enemies, are noticeably lacking in detail.

Yes, you can argue that fluid movement isn't a requirement in a strategy RPG, but we'd be lying if we said we weren't disappointed. With little variation in the action, most of you will turn off the animations to speed things up. Still, considering this is the only criticism, it's hardly a major cause for complaint…

GERAINT EVANS

"IMMERSING YOURSELF IN THE CHARACTERS IS AS ENGAGING AS THE BATTLES"

BACK TO BASE

There are far more management options to be found in Path of Radiance. *You can improve relationships between characters, can promote units and even level up your army using bonus EXP. Organising your force between levels often takes as much time as actually battling.*

+

- Beautiful cutscenes.
- Brilliant battle system.
- Involving story and likeable characters.



- Disappointing battle animations.

IF YOU LIKE THIS…

Fire Emblem: Sacred Stones
Nintendo
NGC/112 5/5
The latest GBA *Emblem* offering. Same strategy RPG action but with several unique new features.



8 VISUALS
Dodgy battle scenes but the overall presentation is great.

8 SOUNDS
Excellent music and effects. Strong voice acting too.

9 MASTERY
A remarkably good strategy game. The best on Gamecube.

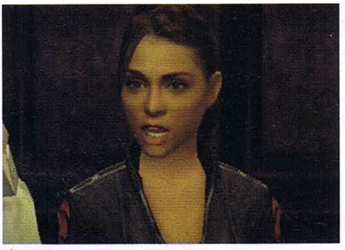
8 LIFESPAN
31 challenging chapters. You''ll be playing for 25 hours.

VERDICT

Tough, engaging and even a little emotional. *Path of Radiance* is the perfect game for those long winter nights.




Δ Auto-targeting makes things easy.


Δ Mmmm...bad girls with guns.


Δ Things explode while you drive really, really fast in your Aston Martin. Unfortunately, at no time is this exciting.


Δ The cover move helps you see things.


Δ A train section – just like *GoldenEye*.


Δ BLAMMO! Have shome of this, shunny.


Δ Another one bites the desk in the bank.

007: FROM RUSSIA WITH LOVE

Eyebrow-arching Connery sim that's as forgettable as its predecessors.

INFO BURST

PUBLISHER	EA
DEVELOPER	EA
RELEASE DATE	OUT NOW
PLAYERS	1-4
MEM. CARD PAGES	26
GBA LINK-UP	NO
SURROUND SOUND	YES
WIDESCREEN	YES
COST	£40



There were two reasons why we weren't expecting much from this, the first 007 game to feature Sean Connery's fully licenced mug (without the aid of an Action Replay code). The first is that we're not sure even EA know what they want to do with the Bond series. One minute it's a first-person shooter, then it's a third-person shooter, then it reverts back to first-person, and currently we're back in third-person again. If it's going to develop as a series of games, it needs to develop organically. Flipping between perspectives and tossing bolted-on driving or flying bits every other year it isn't the way to maintain franchise continuity. You only have to look at the way the *Tiger Woods* series has steadily improved to see the benefit of working to the same template and constantly improving it, snipping out all the flaws as you go along.

The second reason we weren't expecting much is that during our first play of it at this year's E3 show, the very first thing that we were presented with was a shootout between Bond and an enemy across a knee-high pile of rubble, the two of them standing at arm's length inaccurately firing AK47-style weaponry at one another. As unconvincing, unexciting, clumsy firefights go, it was right up there. But you know what? That unappealing section is *still in the game*.

In terms of peripheral guff that has no real impact on the way the game plays, *From Russia With Love* is top class. As always, all the stops have been pulled out in the cutscene, big name actors and storyline departments – although some of the voice-acting is *terrible*, Connery included. Visually, it's quite nice without being spectacular, the soundtrack's lovely, there's some neat hidden extras, and it feels comfortable to control. And we approve of the gadgets, especially the Q copter, which doubles up as a remote

FROM RUSSIA WITH LOVE

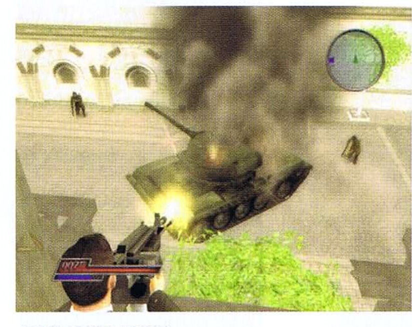
Leaves you neither shaken nor stirred



NO, MR BOND, I EXPECT YOU TO...



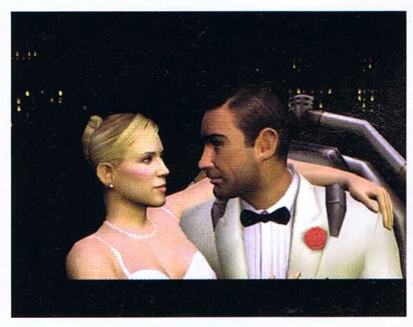
DRIVE SLOW CARS
Driving. Blurgh. We thought we'd seen the last of this in EA's Bond games, but we were wrong. It's not that it's bad, just massively insipid. Like Driving Miss Daisy. With guns.



MAKE LIKE ARNIE
Taking out tanks. It's fun, and we know Bond can go grand scale if need be, but isn't the beauty of 007 that he's a spy, not some kind of tuxedoed version of Schwarzenegger?



FLY SMALL HELICOPTERS
Something good. The Q Copter is a wholly unoriginal invention that, Perfect Dark-style, you can send into locked areas to snoop.



DEAL WITH BEDINGFIELD
Is this the best EA could do? All their cash and they go for Natasha Bedingfield, bless her. Ah well. Here's what you need to know: she looks nice, but her voice acting is terrible.

△ Take out vaguely Greek-looking enemies.



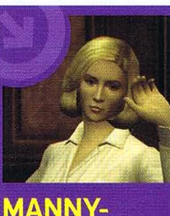
△ Scaling down a wall. Rubbishly. Like Bond.



△ AK47-lead destruction. Just like the, er, film.

mine. The trouble is, the heart of the game is thinner than Michael Jackson's nose.

Most noticeable from the off is that Connery is *slow*. He waddles around, half-jogging from explosion to gunfight like he's either a) got something wet and heavy in his trouser suit, or b) isn't too perturbed about armies of masked gunmen leaping out of dark corners and hedgerows. It's an easy game too, even on higher difficulty settings, so everything's played out at a leisurely, tension-free pace. Enemies appear, you pop them, you amble to the next batch, you pop them, move to the next batch, and so it goes on and on...



MANNY-PENNY

There's a great bit – presumably a bug missed by the game testers – where you leave M's office and see Moneypenny across the way. She says "You must get down to Q lab" – in a man's voice! Brilliant, yet slightly scary.

You can try to mix it up a little with the stealth option (accessed via Z) but this has its own problems. AI is pretty dumb, so an enemy can virtually be facing you and you can still crouch-walk up to them and bash their lights out without them registering your approach. It also tends to make the game way too easy, especially as it gives you more time to access the overly-effective 'Bond Focus', which further zooms your view after automatically locking on an enemy, allowing you to take them down with one shot.

> **"CONNERY WADDLES SLOWLY, LIKE HE'S GOT SOMETHING WET IN HIS TROUSER SUIT."**

Problems persist. The driving sections are boring, melee combat clumsy, missions repetitive. Worst thing is the game's too short. Overall, it's an experience built around a licence, and not a licence built around a game.

TIM WEAVER



+
- Easy to play.
- It looks and sounds the business.
- Decent-ish multiplayer.

–
- Incredibly basic.
- Bolted on driving sections are poor fare.
- Cretinous AI.

IF YOU LIKE THIS...

GoldenEye
Vivendi
NGC/9 94%
Looking for the best Bond? You have to go way back to *GoldenEye*. Seriously.

7 VISUALS
Cutscenes are gorgeous, in-game it's extremely tidy stuff.



8 SOUNDS
The soundtrack is great with variants on that famous theme.

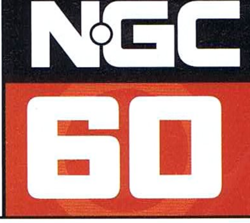


6 MASTERY
Only the cutscenes push the limits of the machine.

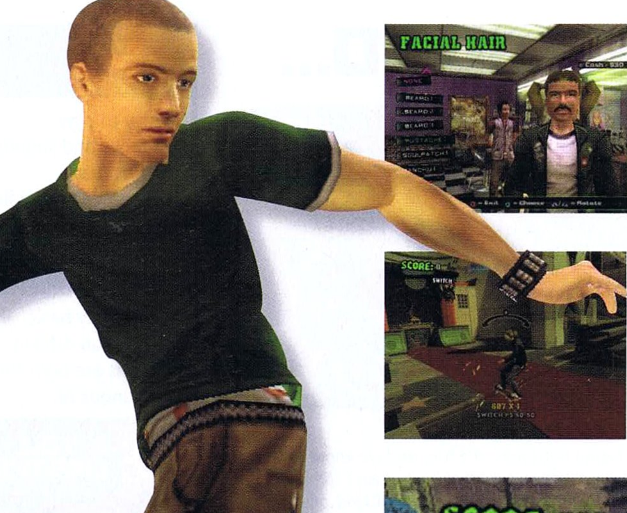


6 LIFESPAN
It's not that hard and not that fun, but it *has* got multiplayer.

VERDICT
It's easy to pick up and moderately fun, but it's also stunningly basic, very linear and an imagination vacuum.

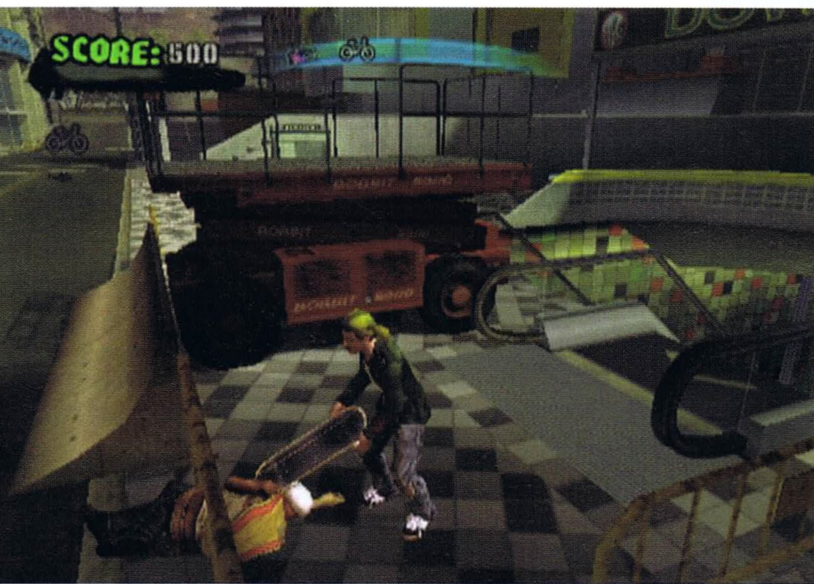


NGC 60





△ If you had girly hair like this, you'd freak out as well.



△ You can use your board to deflect the attentions of persistant beggers and layabouts.

TONY HAWK'S AMERICAN WASTELAND

Grind and ollie any damn place you choose...

After the two *Underground* titles introduced cars, climbing and *Jackass*-style cinematics to the *Tony Hawk's* series, it's easy to forget what a tight, hardcore sort of game the original effort was.

Seven games into the franchise, it's all become so sprawlingly vast that entire levels from the early games are included as throwaway bonuses. You could easily spend days exploring new options before even trying the main story mode.

But the skating focus that defined the first couple of instalments is back, making *American Wasteland* all the better for it. We can't imagine many players will bother with every single aspect of each game mode but there's definitely something for everyone. And no cars, either.

"THE SKATING FOCUS THAT DEFINED THE FIRST COUPLE OF INSTALMENTS IS BACK"

The most significant chunk of the game is the huge LA-themed skatepark which, as you'll know if you've seen the TV ads, has no loading screens. What it does have is a series of long *Starfox*-style tunnels connecting the different areas, but at least it's better than having to watch a progress bar.

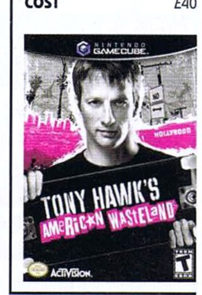
Anyway, the place is enormous and your primary objective is to collect various pieces of it for your special Skate Ranch, located out in the sticks. The more missions you complete, the more bits get added. And if you get tired of skating all the time, you can pick up an entirely optional BMX to experience a very different dual-analogue style of stunt control.

It's a lot of fun, although you'll need plenty of stamina and a serious Tony Hawk fetish to get the most out of it. But it'll all seem worth it when you complete your first combo that includes whacking someone around the head with your deck.

MARTIN KITTS

INFO BURST

PUBLISHER	ACTIVISION
DEVELOPER	NEVERSOFT
RELEASE DATE	OUT NOW
PLAYERS	1-2
MEM. CARD PAGES	13
GBA LINK-UP	NO
SURROUND SOUND	YES
WIDESCREEN	YES
COST	£40





- One big city.
- Classic levels.
- BMX bikes.



- Empty corridors.
- Seen it all before in previous *Hawk's*.



IF YOU LIKE THIS...

Aggressive Inline
Acclaim
NGC/72 81%
A decent and unusual alternative for those who want to stand out from the crowd.



7 VISUALS
Busy city split into *Starfox Adventures*-style chunks.

7 SOUNDS
Good skate effects and ear-reaming corporate punk.

6 MASTERY
Smooth animation but the odd bit of pop-up to live with.

8 LIFESPAN
It's a challenging monster of a skateboarding game.

VERDICT

More skateboarding than you'll know what to do with. Say goodbye to your social lives now, Hawk fans.

NGC 81

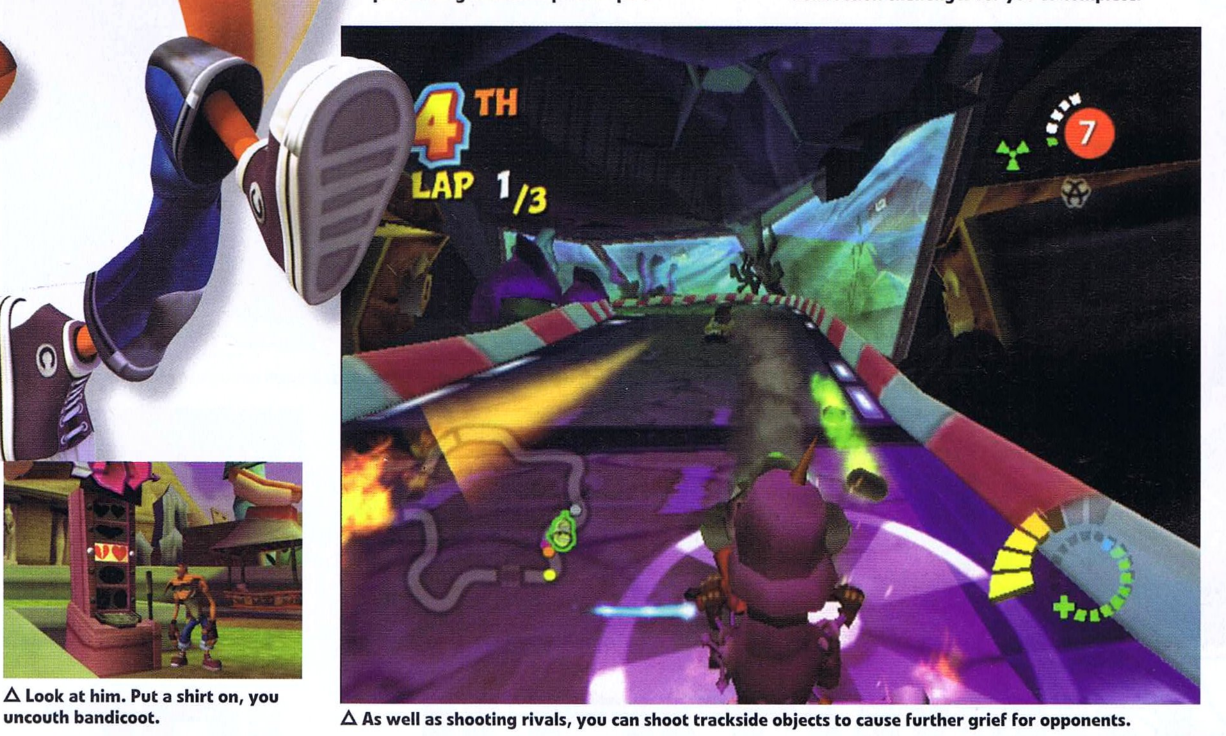


△ Stunt arenas award you points for performing mid-air flips and spins.





△ Besides the kart races, there are hot lap and destruction challenges for you to complete.



△ Look at him. Put a shirt on, you uncouth bandicoot.

△ As well as shooting rivals, you can shoot trackside objects to cause further grief for opponents.

CRASH TAG TEAM RACING

A whole new kind of hell on wheels.

INFO BURST

PUBLISHER	VIVENDI
DEVELOPER	RADICAL
RELEASE DATE	OUT NOW
PLAYERS	1-4
MEM. CARD PAGES	2
GBA LINK-UP	NO
SURROUND SOUND	NO
WIDESCREEN	NO
COST	£40

Back when Crash was Sony's main man (or rather, bandicoot), he starred in *Crash Team Racing*, a complete *Mario Kart* clone acclaimed only by people who didn't own an N64. These days of course, Vivendi own his ginger ass and after the poor *Crash Nitro Kart* (**NGC**/89 53%), he's back on the track with *Crash Tag Team Racing*. And he's still cribbing ideas from *Mario Kart*.

Well, one idea in particular – the controversial two-characters-in-one-kart idea from *Mario Kart: Double Dash*. But here they've 'tweaked' it, so rather than choosing two racers before the race, you can fuse your car with a rival mid-race. This means you can man the on-board gun while the other racer drives or vice versa. But ridiculously, it also means that if you're hurtling towards the finish line in second place, you can merge with the car in front and win the race. You might laugh, but when someone pays you back with the same sneaky tactic, you'll want to rip the disc out of your Gamecube and use it as a coaster. Even then, you'll turn it over to the shiny side.

> "YOU'LL WANT TO RIP THE DISC OUT OF YOUR GAMECUBE AND USE IT AS A COASTER"

Karting games are meant to be a bit chaotic, but with the racers constantly merging, it just becomes confusing and you won't know what's going on half the time. Shame, because the tracks are passable, and the racing is just about fast enough.

But it's not all about racing. In an attempt to please people who fondly remember Crash's platforming days (ie no one), you can hot-foot around Motor World running errands for the bandicoot's pals. But here the camera is so poor, you can't even see some of the platforms you're meant to be jumping on.

Still at least the Die-o-rama bits are good. After completing tasks, you'll unlock cartoon sequences which show the bandicoot dying in increasingly hilarious circumstances. And why not? After playing *Crash Tag Team Racing* for a few hours, who wouldn't want to see the 'mad' marsupial die? And never return.

TOM EAST

+

- Tons to see, do and unlock.
- It looks quite pretty throughout.

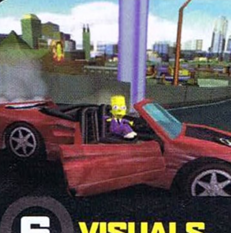


–

- The car fusing idea is just so stupid.
- Camera can be annoying.

IF YOU LIKE THIS...

The Simpsons: Hit & Run
Vivendi
NGC/87 80%
Similar cartoon-esque fun with less destruction but more personality.





6 VISUALS
Nothing to criticise here – solid and clear throughout.



6 SOUNDS
Fitting music and effects for such a cartoon-like world.

3 MASTERY
The camera is awful and the racing is confusing.



7 LIFESPAN
Tons of race goals plus unlockable bits and bobs.

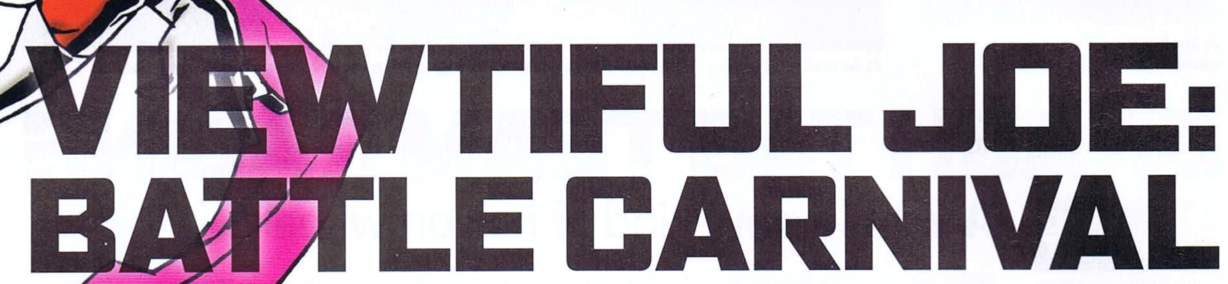
VERDICT

With an idea as bad as car fusing, this could never, ever hope to compete with *Mario Kart*. Dreadful stuff.



47

△ Even when you finally get your 'eye in' to the frantic madness all around, it's still enough to give you a headache.



VIEWTIFUL JOE: BATTLE CARNIVAL

VJ piles on the pressure in this bonkers party battler…

INFO BURST

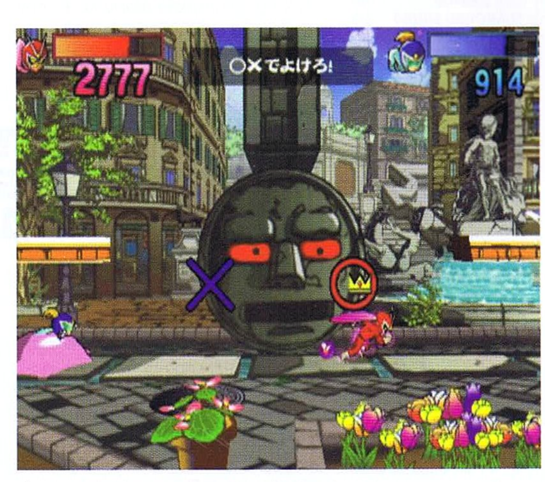
PUBLISHER	CAPCOM
DEVELOPER	CLOVER
RELEASE DATE	NOW (JAP)
PLAYERS	1-4
MEM. CARD PAGES	3
GBA LINK-UP	NO
SURROUND SOUND	NO
WIDESCREEN	NO
COST	6,300 ¥ (£31)



The most obvious comparison to make here is with *Super Smash Bros Melee* – and it's justified, to a point. You can play with up to four players, beating the coins out of people and collecting them to make yourself the 'winner'. The fighting system is simplistic, depending on simple, single directional inputs in conjunction with the relevant attack button to execute different moves. It's also completely and utterly relentless on the senses.

So, yes, it *is* a little bit like *Smash Bros*. But while the Gamecube best-seller hid oceans of depth under its simple controls, *Viewtiful Joe* does not. *Smash* allowed all manner of little tricks – like environment exploiting combos – that would separate the button masher from the hardened veteran. You can't really do this in *VJ*; a volley of punches against a player gives

> **"AT ITS MOST HECTIC, IT'S INCREDIBLY DIFFICULT TO TRACK WHAT'S GOING ON"**



△ You have to ensure you're 'circle-side' before the stone face shuts the door on you. Right side = cash. Wrong side = pain.

VIEWTIFUL JOE
Ludicrous Japanese brawling



In this one, you have to be the one holding the flag at the end of the battle.



Make sure you get in those doors to avoid the giant bomb.



It's often so hectic, you can't really see what's going on.



To win, you need to grab the most cash and deal the killer blow.



The first of the many boss battles takes pace on this highly-unstable runaway biplane.



If you manage to 'kill' your opponent, they lose all their accumulated wealth of coins.



Reaction time – simply press the correct button before your opponent does. It's furiously addictive.

them brief periods of invulnerability to attack, which means you can't relentlessly pound them into oblivion. There are no clever combos, with *VJ's* depth coming instead from the overarching structures, the rules, power-ups, challenges and environments, that the game utilises. It's also here that things not only get tricky, but uncompromisingly hectic.

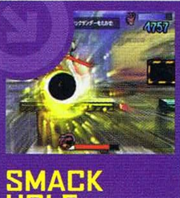
Your first port of call should be the Story mode, mainly because it features an extensive tutorial. After this you can launch yourself into the main single-player experience: a series of long-running battles against individual characters and groups of enemies. These battles run over three scenes and a boss battle, and each of the scenes has three mini-battles that run seamlessly into each other and which vary in challenge type. You not only need to win two out of three mini-battles to move on, but also need to collect the most V coins from the other competitors to be the winner.

The battles themselves aren't just simple arena-based affairs and play more like mini-challenges. In one instance you may have to collect numbered gems while climbing or falling up the screen. In another battle, you might have to be the player who dispatches a boss, hits a specific item or collects certain icons. The requirements for each battle are wildly diverse and, in this respect, it's a very different game to *Smash Bros.*

We like it a great deal. The game is enjoyable in single-player and very intense. The only real criticism is that at its most hectic, it's incredibly difficult to track what's going on – especially in four character battles. And as the game progresses, the developers adopt the policy of throwing even more into the mix, with more to keep track of but less time to cope.

The game is undoubtedly exciting, but it's rarely a true test of skill – more one of awareness and being the first to react to a change in situation. Consequently, it isn't as rewarding as it could have been.

GERAINT EVANS



SMACK HOLE

One of the power-ups in VJ whisks each player into a little impromptu mini-game. These range from simply mashing the buttons as fast as you can to reaction and precision tests. Whoever wins gets to collect all their opponents' coins.

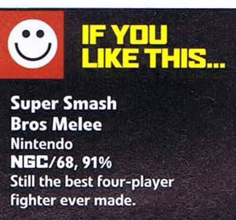


- Fast, frantic, and loads of fun.
- Steep challenge.
- Great multiplayer.

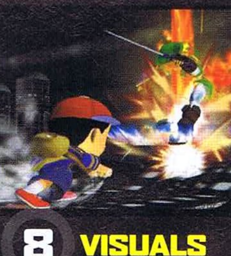


- Too chaotic for its own good at times.
- Little in the way of depth.

IF YOU LIKE THIS...



Super Smash Bros Melee
Nintendo
NGC/68, 91%
Still the best four-player fighter ever made.



8 VISUALS

Bright, colourful and super-stylised as you'd expect.



8 SOUNDS

HIYA! GYAAAAH! IKUSE! Really loud. All the time.



8 MASTERY

Smooth as butter, with plenty of non-stop action.



8 LIFESPAN

A solid single-player, but the multiplayer is where it's at.

VERDICT

An incredibly quirky and intense multiplayer brawler that is surprisingly good fun, but almost too manic.



80



MARIO & LUIGI™ PARTNERS IN TIME

Something smells funny in the Mushroom Kingdom and, no, it's not Luigi's finger. Find out what, next month.



- *True Crime, Mario Party 7, Prince of Persia, Harry Potter* reviewed and rated!
- NGC's best games of 2005 revealed!

Magazine contents subject to change – but only for the better!

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CARTWARMING CHRISTMAS TALES V

Spoon yourself a slab of Christmas Pud and curl up in front of the fire for NGC's fifth collection of romantic winter's tales.

LOVE AND ROCKETS

really no place for a grenade.

The ballroom, gloriously decked out in the finest tinsel and foil angels, was full of people. But Nell felt lonely. She stumbled around the dancefloor, struggling to remember the square-dancing lessons from her childhood. One square left, two squares up… really, it was useless.

Her partner, some faceless unit from the Orange Army, kept her at arm's length. Gun's length, actually: did these infantrymen ever put their rifles down?

Oh, why were men so weak? Hanging around in packs, always on the prowl for new conquests. They'd charge in with a brief burst of weapon spray, then it was all over. Even if you did get attached to one, it wouldn't be long before he'd come home with a faraway look in his eyes and telltale tank tracks on his shirt collar.

The band's song drew to a close. Nell smiled wanly at her partner and casually moved for the door. This really wasn't her territory.

96

LOVE AND ROCKETS

Suddenly, she felt a light touch on her arm. "May I haf this dance?" roared a voice close to her ear.

Nell swung around. "Kommander Ubel!"

"If you turn me down then I vill be *mortar*-fied," smiled the imposing German commander, his hilarious comedy accent making her tingle. "You know, as in *mortar*!"

They laughed. When was the last time Nell had laughed so freely? Probably when her young charge Andy had expertly used his Bombers to blow 24 men into bloody chunks. But that was a sort of maniacal, screeching laugh. This was softer, easier, more natural.

"Of… of course," stuttered Nell, and put her hand in Ubel's.

After only a few seconds of whirling around the dancefloor, Ubel pulled Nell close. "Blizzard isn't my only CO Power," he whispered. "In fact, I suppose you're thinking that's just a sniper rifle in my

97

WHAT BECOMES OF THE BROKEN-KARTED?

with a banana from behind.

"So what do you think?" asked Toad, grinning.

Toadette twizzled her pigtail, giggled, and ran her fingertips over the chassis. It was a big, purple-headed beast of a machine. The sleekest, fastest kart ever made.

Looking around the pits, she could see why Toad was grinning. Koopa was tinkering with what looked like the shell of a dead friend – on wheels. Mario and Luigi were arguing about where the overflow pipe should go. Donkey Kong was sitting in a tree trunk.

Yes, this was Toad's day. Toadette gazed up at him, feeling nothing but love for this stumpy little trouserless mushroom. He grinned at her. She loved to see him happy. She loved *him*. Of course, body odour had always been a problem with men made entirely of fungus. But Toad always came to her prewashed. And, on special days, wrapped in clingfilm.

"This is hot stuff!" cooed Toadette,

72

WHAT BECOMES OF THE BROKEN-KARTED?

stroking Toad's… was it his head or a hat? "I just *know* you're going to win. The cup's as good as yours, mushy!"

Toad grinned. "I was thinking… *ours*," he said, grinning. "So why don't you join me for the race?"

In a flash, she experienced a black-and-white flashback scene. The horrific accident that she had yet to tell Toad about. The unbearable heat of the flames. Her best friend, dead beside her. The horror of it. A beautiful young mushroom… sliced in two and roasted.

"Toadette! Toadette!"

She came to. Toad was gripping her hand, a worried grin etched across his face. She focused, her heart still pounding in her chest. She'd have to go through with it. The doctors had told her she had to confront this condition, this wretched autoinfernoaphobia. She'd do it.

"Of course," she whispered. "Let's get out there and make them eat mushroom!"

Toad grinned with joy, his soul on fire with delight. "Then grab hold of this gearstick and

73



trapping it in the door and not entirely disliking it.

"What's this, hair-boy?" screamed Nintendo's Executive Vice President Of Sales And Marketing, using the volume he usually reserved for demolishing buildings and yelling swear words at God. He was brandishing a piece of paper in his steak-like fist. Miyamoto's heart sank.

"Mr Fils-Aime–" began Miyamoto.

"That's FILS-AIME!" corrected the Executive Vice President Of Sales And Marketing, his voice knocking a small bird off a branch in Greenland, his eyes doing the thing that until this moment had only been a terrifying rumour.

"Mr Fils-Aime–" began Miyamoto.

"Want three quarters of an hour off for Christmas, do you?" asked Fils-Aime, bellowingly. "Think again, Wigsy! I've lined you up for interviews from here until when *Super Mario 128*'s done!"

"But that's six years of inter–" began

40

KICKING THE ASS OF LOVE

Miyamoto.

Fils-Aime lunged. Miyamoto watched as the man's arm – an arm like a cow – drew back. He knew what was coming. He still remembered Reggie's new catchphrase echoing around the office for the first time three weeks before. "I'm about punching face! I'm about punching faaaaaace!"

But today Fils-Aime *wasn't* about punching face. Instinctively, Miyamoto's banjo training took over. His plucking arm flicked up, catching Fils-Aime's iron fist just millimetres from contact.

Their eyes locked. There was silence except for the howling wind that could be heard outside, in the desolate wastes that surrounded the offices. Neither man moved.

Slowly, imperceptibly at first, a tear formed in the Executive Vice Left Eye Of Sales And Marketing. Fils-Aime's fist unravelled, and he gently, yet tentatively, brushed his sausage-like fingers against Miyamoto's cheek. He extended his

41

THE EARTH MOO-VES

elbow-deep the morning before.

"Oh, Muffy," said Jethro, running his swollen farmer's fingers through the hair of his loved one, which was elegantly hairsprayed into the shape of six curly helpings of *I Can't Believe It's Not Butter*. "I've loved you ever since I found and read your secret diary and realised you were my easiest shot at marriage."

Muffy sighed and smiled. Through the window, she could see the snow falling outside, gently wrapping homeless Murray, lying face up in the horse trough and making a sound like a zombie lifting weights, in a blanket of purest white. It was a beautiful day.

This surprise lunch with Jethro, the first time he'd cooked her a steaming bowl of his onion soup since three hours ago, was the icing on the cake. Or, more accurately, the soup. The layer of icing on top was Jethro's special Christmas touch.

Still smiling, Muffy plunged her spoon

34

into her steaming broth. She was surprised when it hit something solid. Reaching into the bowl, she found the reason. A beautiful diamond ring! Looking closer, she found a message etched on the inside of the ring: "For The Most Attainable Girl In Forget-Me-Not Valley".

Muffy looked up to find Jethro's eyes as full of hope as his mouth was full of vegetable.

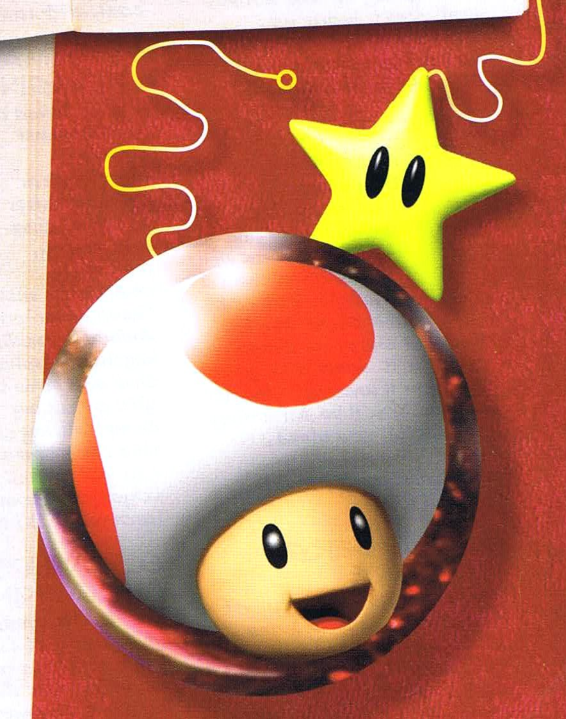
"Oh, Jethro," screamed Muffy. "Of course I'll marry you, you mute backward bumpkin of love!" Jethro took the ring, and nervously slipped it over her finger, which was still moist from the starter of onion balls (with onion dip) earlier.

Suddenly, the front door suddenly flew open. Flakes of snow drifted around the imposing figure filling the doorframe.

"Mo-faaaaaaaaa!"

"Mukumuku!" gasped Muffy. "No... no! We're over! Why can't you accept it? How can I live with someone with fur on their

35



The 12 Gifts of Christmas

Find the perfect gift for your fellow Ninty fan – or fill your own stocking with Nintendo cheer.



12. LORD A-CUDDLING

Never has the cast of *The Legend of Zelda* looked so downright huggable. Just look at Ganondorf there, heart-breakingly squeezable with the haircut he knew was a mistake the moment he left the hairdresser's. Then look at the price. Now *that's* evil.
Available from: www.cmdstore.com, $149.95 (around £84) for the set



11. LADY BATHING

For the 'special' retro N64 fan in the family: a soap dish with the dishy Asuku from *Neon Genesis Evangelion* sitting inside. We can imagine giving her a friendly stroke as we wash our hands after going to the toilet. Just don't judge us.
Available from: www.cartoonpassion.com, $19.99 (around £11)

10. SOAP A-SURPRISING

Buy someone a bar of soap for Christmas and you might as well have given them a wedgie. But not this *Super Mario Sunshine Surprise Soap!* As you wear it down with your filth, you'll uncover a Mario figurine. You'll be scrubbing yourself til you bleed.
Available from: www.cmdstore.com, $9.95 (around £6)

9. PLUMBERS PLUMBING

May's E3 show was full of burger-packed Americans wearing the sad old 'Nintendo Counsellor' tshirt. Stand out from the crowd with this 'tee', which lets you properly pledge allegiance to the Bros - and all without losing your lady appeal. That's pushing it actually.
Available from: www.80stees.com, $20 (around £11)



8. MAID A-MILKING IT

Capcom could put Chun Li's face on a plate of chips and happily charge ten quid fifty for it. Here, the buxom fightress gets plastered all over a wall clock, making it *Street Fighter* time *all* the time. Except when the batteries run out.
Available from: www.anistop.com, $13 (around £8)

7. ANIMALS A-CROSSING

If your loved one would rather clean a giraffe's car than remember your wedding anniversary, feed their obsession with these super-cute *Animal Crossing* keychain plushes. Give someone the gift of a tiny chimp railway conductor this Christmas.
Available from: www.toysnjoys.com, $49.95 (around £28) for the lot

6. GANUDO A-TTACKING

The festive present that'll give you that Christmas feeling all year round: it's a mad *Resident Evil 4* villager with a sack over his head and a chainsaw! Leon and Ada are also available - you know your sister would forget about that stupid old Malibu Barbie set if she got these.
Available from: www.gkworld.com, $19.95 (around £11)



5. GOLDEN BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

These business card holders are modelled on old Japanese Nintendo carts, giving you the unique 'in' you need to secure that multimillion dollar business deal. Unless you're dealing with someone from Sony or Microsoft, of course. Then it'd be a disaster.
Available from: www.banpresto.co.jp



4. CALLING BIRD

That's probably no way to refer to the lady Aran: she could have you, mate. This standup Samus looks a bit too plasticky for our tastes - you can't be taken seriously as an inter-galactic bounty hunter when your hair looks like spilled syrup. But wait – it's nearly $140. It *must* be good, mustn't it?
Available from: www.cmdstore.com, $139.95 (around £80)



3. JAPANESE HAMSTERS

If only Dr Frankenstein had got a kit like this for Christmas, he'd have been a much bigger hit with the kids. There are twelve different styles of Make-Your-Own-Hamtaro set available, and you can be sure the resulting hamsters won't go leaving sesame seed shells everywhere. *Or will they?*
Available from: www.wizzywig.com, $2 (around £1)

2. TOTAL DOGS

Christmas isn't just for Nintendogs on DS: why not get someone *another* fake mutt for the holidays? These plushes don't need feeding, won't wet the floor, and respond to a frisbee throw with disinterested silence. Brilliant!
Available from: www.play-asia.com, $19.90 (around £11)

1. POSTER ON YOUR BEDROOM WALL



Get your own back on people who think they're special for having a vintage *Casablanca* poster on the wall. These original Japanese *Zelda* posters will give you the aura of someone unbearably cool. Who likes to sword goblins in the mouth and play the ocarina.
Available from: www.gkworld.com, $2.95 (around £4)

CHRISTMAS DAY 25th December

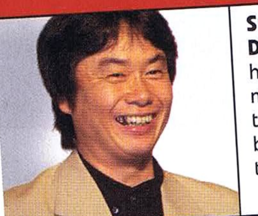
CHRISTMAS DAY
Television

Mushroom 1

Thought For Christmas *7.25* Solid Snake bores viewers senseless with gruff talk about the environment… for Christmas!



The Santa Clause *11.00* Giant sales obsessive gets his big chance to shine as the new Daddy Christmas.



Strictly Mario Dancing *6.00* It's-a him! Mario's dance moves includes the turtle, the electric boogaloo, and the twisting U-bend.



6.00 Mushroom News 24
A look back at the most notable events of 2005, including the brutal one-man gun rampage in Spain, the millions left homeless by the after-effects of David Banner's near-fatal radiation poisoning, and the heart-warming story of the adorable fox that saved the entire galaxy from certain death. *Followed by a summary of wind waking.* 34129

7.00 Cartoons
Stupid kiddy visuals that suXor lik3 my ass or do u like cartoonz or sumthing u looser? (S) 3753

7.25 Thought For Christmas
As the new year approaches, guest thoughtsman Solid Snake ruminates unskippably and at length on the increasingly visible effects of global warming in 2005, whilst repeatedly kicking an invisible ninja in the stomach. (S) 09881

7.30 FILM: It's A Wonderful Life ★★★★★
Classic feel-good drama. A farmer is driven to the brink of suicide after realising he spends 20 hours of every day pouring water on vegetables. But a small sprite shows him the true value of his life – then enters into a verbal contract that commits him to endless back-breaking work while the farmer gets busy with the ladies. Includes scenes of a mild agricultural nature. (S)
The Farmer **Patrick Swayze**
Magic Sprite **Paul Walker**
Muffy **Natasha Bedingfield**
Director Nat Sume (1953) (BW) 444192

10.00 Songs of Praise: Carols from Hyrule
Next year's programme, broadcast live from the Temple of Time. The Jigglypuff Choir sings timeless hymns including "In the Bleak Midwinter Without *Twilight Princess*." (S) 60890

11.00 Christmas Top of the Pops
Will Donkey Kong secure the coveted Christmas Number One with 'I'm Battering Your Bongos For Christmas'? Or can Samus Aran claim the top spot with 'Metroids Roasting When I Open Fire'? Presented by that disco-loving freak with the stupid afro from *Pokémon Colosseum*. (S) 97792

◀ Format variations overleaf

12.45 FILM: The Santa Clause ★★★★
Comedy. After an accident on Christmas Eve, Reggie, an Executive Vice President Of Sales And Marketing, is made the new Santa Claus. The world's children wake up to find their chimneys demolished, flecks of mince pie and sherry all over the walls, and their stockings filled with GC-GBA link cables and unsold copies of *Kirby Air Ride*. (S)
Reggie **Arnold Schwarzenegger**
Wide-eyed boy **Shigeru Miyamoto**
Mario **Barry Chuckle**
Kirby **Jack Black**
Director Hiroshi Yamauchi (1994) 491129

1.30 Animal Crossing
Part one. First of a Christmas double bill of the long-running soap. Monique walks out of her house and back in again, while Tom Nook stands motionless in his shop until someone comes in. Meanwhile, Butch wonders if inviting Mr Resetti to his Christmas party was a mistake. (S) 52931

2.00 Wario's Spinny-Dizzy Turkey-Vomiting Nutcase Half Hour
Christmas edition of the incomprehensible high-speed game show, in which big cash prizes are on offer for the first contestant to work out what the hell is going on (S) 8882

2.30 The Bill
A festive half-hour of Psyduck holding his head and screaming in pain. In-vision subtitles. (S) 1475678

3.00 The Princess's Speech
(S) 12046

3.02 The Princess Getting Carted Off Over The Shoulder Of A Giant Dinosaur
(S) 1984423

3.10 FILM: GoldenEye
This recent remake from EA Productions deviates from the plot of the original. After an accident during a rescue mission in a Sudanese toy factory, MI6 agent Tristan Eye is coated from head to foot in gold paint. (S)
Tristan Eye **Natasha Bedingfield**
Christiana Tuesday **50 Cent**
Baron von Evil **DJ Otzi**
Guard with hat **Larry Probst**
Guard in skip **Barry Chuckle**
Director A Cretin (2004, PG) 91473

5.00 Changing Rooms
Makeover expert Sam Fisher recalls the best – and worst – of the year's makeovers, including installing lockless doors in a Saudi Arabian Sheikh's mansion, fitting an offshore oil rig with a lavish 'Sniper's Balcony' and encouraging the owners of a military facility in North Korea to move all their most secretive data to easily-accessible cupboards without light switches. (S) 4208916

5.30 FILM: The Snowman ★★★★
Much-loved festive animation. Bowser tears a snowman to pieces after it ruins his Sherbet Island record attempt for the 15th time in a row. (S) 9568

6.00 Strictly Mario Dancing
Three-and-a-half hours of Mario breakdancing just like in the silly artwork for *Dance Dance Revolution*. Plus, celebrity guests Wario and Waluigi waltz awkwardly and refuse to look each other in the eye while repeatedly muttering 'wah' under their breath. (S) 2995

9.30 Animal Crossing
Part two. Monique stares into the middle distance. Mr Resetti takes a pickaxe to the silverware. (S) 1128409

10.00 FILM: 386 Pokémon ★★★★
Animated classic. All evil-hearted Cruella de Fils wants for Christmas is a fur coat but she wants it made from the hides of all the Pokémon running wild in Hoenn. Eight years of madcap chasing later, de Fils learns that yet another new set of monsters has mysteriously 'materialized' on the island, and gives up to play *Nintendogs* instead.
Cruella de Fils **Natasha Bedingfield**
Pikachu **Barry Chuckle**
Director P Oak (1955, PG) 6340

10.35 Yamauchi's Christmas
The reality show returns with further adventures from the home of the former Nintendo president. Yamauchi barks orders at a set of plush toys seated behind desks made from sellotape and cardboard, while his children prepare the medicine. (S) 885

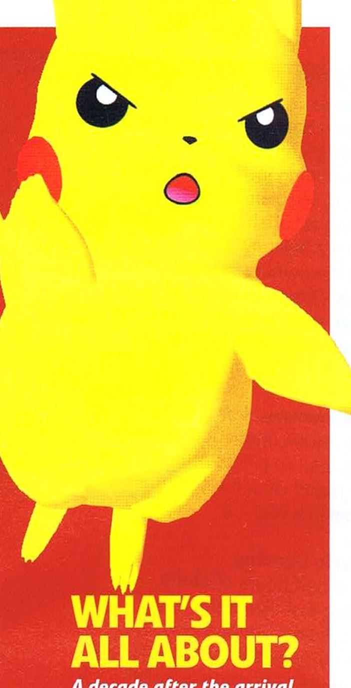
★★★★★ Great ★★★★ Good ★★★ OK ★★ Poor ★ Street Fighter: The Movie



Capture every Shadow Pokémon

POKÉMON XD GALE OF DARKNESS





WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?

A decade after the arrival of the original Game Boy game, the spirit of the original battlin' series has been recaptured and reborn as a fully-fledged Gamecube RPG. Two-on-two battles abound as you travel around in search of 83 elusive Shadow Pokémon.

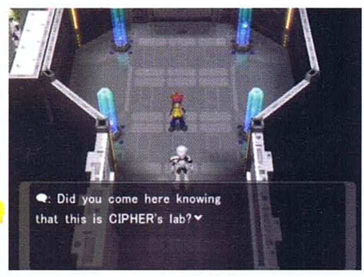


WHAT WE SAID IN ISSUE 111

XD's battle system is built on nearly ten years of fine-tuning and it shows. With plenty to do and see and a great multiplayer, XD gives us all what we've been waiting for. It's the game Colosseum should have been.



SNAGGING SHADOW POKÉMON



The good news is that Shadow Pokémon aren't as hard to catch as they were in *Pokémon Colosseum*. Even with standard-issue Poké Balls, you'll probably Snag a Shadow Pokémon. If it doesn't work the first time, reduce its HP to the point where its life bar turns yellow, then try again.

PURIFYING SHADOW POKÉMON



As in *Pokémon Colosseum*, you'll need to purify your Shadow Pokémon before they can gain EXP or be given nicknames. And the good news is, this process is a lot faster than it was in that game.

There are four main ways of reducing a Shadow Pokémon's darkness meter, three of which are convenient. You can rub them down with Scents, available from Agate Village's shops, but you don't really need to. Instead, just keep Shadow Pokémon in your active party; be sure to use them in battles; and if they enter Reverse Mode, use the Call command to bring them to their senses. They'll be ready for purification in no time.

When a Shadow Pokémon's darkness meter is empty, you can purify it the rest of the way by bringing it to the Relic Stone underneath Agate Village. When you do so, the Pokémon will receive a shiny ribbon, as well as all the EXP it should have earned but didn't while it was battling.

NOT PURIFYING SHADOW POKÉMON



On the other hand, let's not be too hasty about this. Shadow Pokémon are a potent strategic asset, and you shouldn't be in a hurry to bring them to the Relic Stone.

Each Shadow Pokémon has two Shadow powers, such as Shadow Blitz, Shadow Beam, or Shadow Hold. If a Shadow power inflicts direct damage, it will always be super-effective against non-Shadow Pokémon; conversely, it will always be ineffective against other Shadow Pokémon.

This is a big advantage, especially as you get towards the endgame and you start running into two or more Shadow Pokémon at a time, and especially as a Shadow Pokémon begins relearning its old abilities. You can really mop the floor with enemy Pokémon by exploiting their vulnerability to Shadow, while simultaneously taking minimal damage from their Shadow attacks.

The only drawback to this is that a Shadow Pokémon doesn't earn EXP. Then again, since a Shadow Pokémon tends to be a couple of levels ahead of the current curve is, this is rarely a problem.

WHERE TO FIND THEM



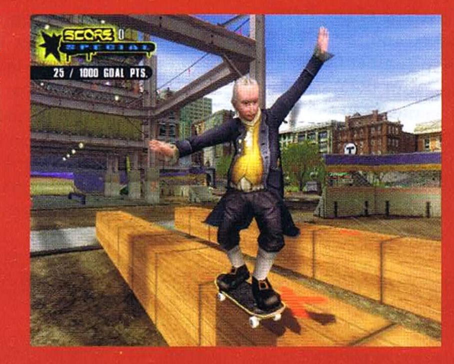
Teddiursa (Normal)
You'll acquire this almost automatically from Spy Naps near the game's start.



Seel (Water)
To get to Snattle, you'll need to dispatch his minion Egrog's Pokémon first.

TIPS EXTRA

THE TIPS YOU NEED FOR THE GAMES YOU'RE PLAYING...



TONY HAWK'S UNDERGROUND 2

MINDY
Go to the Cheat menu and enter help1nghand.

UNLOCKABLE MOVIES
Bails N' Burns 1 of 2
Complete Classic Mode.

POKÉMON XD: GALE OF DARKNESS

Capture all the little Pokémon



Ledyba (Bug/Flying)
After you talk to Perr in Gateon Port, head down the bridge behind him until you reach Casual Guy Cyle on the island at the end.



Poochyena (Dark)
On your way back from defeating Cyle, rotate the bridges so you can reach the lighthouse. Bodybuilder Kilen is on the roof.



Houndour (Fire/Dark), Spheal (Water/Ice), Baltoy (Ground/Psychic), Mareep (Electric), Gulpin (Poison), Seedot (Grass)
The six Hexagon Brothers outside the Cipher Lab are each carrying a Shadow Pokémon.



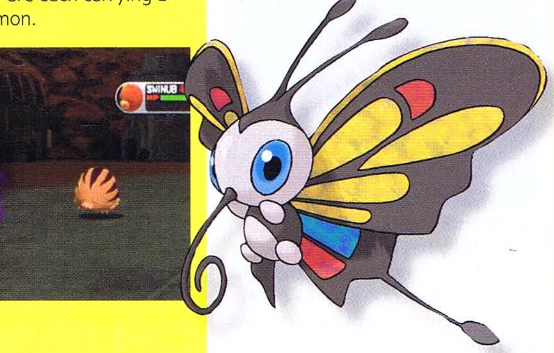
Spinarak (Bug), Numel (Fire/Ground), Carvanha (Water/Dark)
These Shadow Pokémon are held by various Cipher Peons who'll ambush you as you progress through the Cipher Lab for the first time.



Shroomish (Grass)
Cipher R&D Klots is holding this Shadow Pokémon. He's waiting for you in the Cipher Lab's boardroom.



Pineco (Bug)
As you're leaving the mayor's house in Phenac City, you'll be ambushed by Cipher Peon Gonrag.





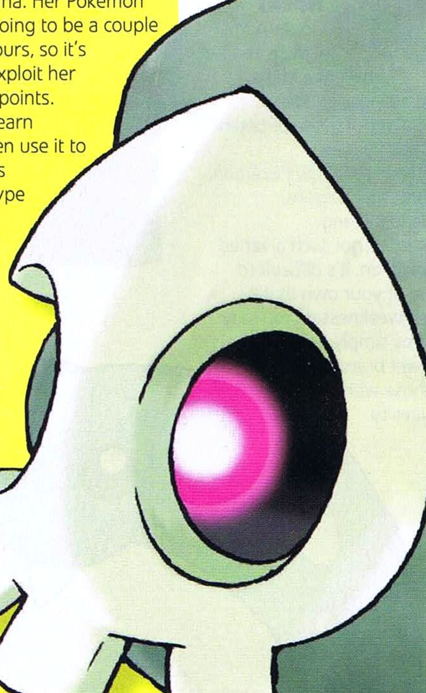
Delicatty (Normal)
It's time for the first real boss fight of the game. Lovrina will attack you as you're trying to leave the Cipher Lab with Professor Crane in tow. The last Pokémon she sends against you will be the challenging Delicatty Shadow Pokémon.

You may want to heal up and buy plenty of Potions before you take on Spy Naps to free Crane, as you won't have the chance to recover before you go after Lovrina. Her Pokémon are all probably going to be a couple of levels above yours, so it's crucial that you exploit her Pokémon's weak points.

Have Mareep learn Thundershock then use it to wipe out Lovrina's Lovedisc. A Fire-type attack, like a Houndoon's Ember, will drop the Beautifly, and her Roselia can be taken out with Psybeam or Ember. When she brings out Delicatty, have a pair of Shadow Pokémon on the field so its Shadow Rush doesn't tear you apart.



Voltorb (Electric)
You'll encounter Miror B at the last Poké-spot you visit. He's packing a trio of Lombres, as well as this Shadow Pokémon. The Lombres can be dealt with easily by using Poison attacks like Sludge, but watch out for the Voltorb's insane Speed.



Bails N' Burns 2 of 2
Complete Story Mode 100%.

Dev-Team Skates
Complete Classic Mode 100%.

American Wasteland
Complete Story Mode.

UNLOCKABLE CHARACTERS
Robot Tony, Mindy
Complete Story Mode on Easy.

Little John, Iggy, Jason Ellis
Complete Story Mode on Normal.

Jimbo, Murphy, Mega
Complete Story Mode on Hard/Sick.

Billie Joe, Boone
Complete Classic Mode on Normal.

Mat Hoffman, Dave
Complete Classic Mode on Sick/Hard.

Master Zen, Hardhat Guy, Downtown Guy, Grafitti Guy
Complete Classic Mode 100%.

Baller, Welder, Camera Guy, Chloe
Complete Story Mode 100%.

Barber, Carnival Guy, Downtown Guy , French Guy
Complete All Skate Ranch Missions.

Oil Rig Guy, Policeman, Street Performer, Boone
Clear All Gaps.

THE SIMS 2

UNLOCK CHEAT GNOME (You must enter this before inputting any other cheat)
L, R, Up, A and Z.

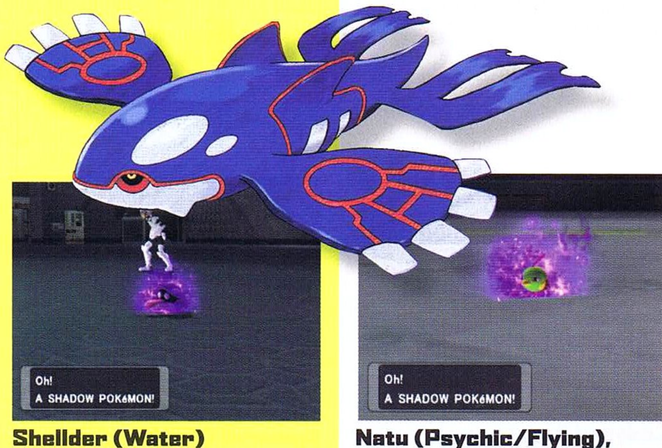
ADVANCE TIME 6 HOURS
X, B, L, Up and Down.

GIVE MONEY
R, L, Z, Right and Left.



Makuhita (Fighting)
When you get off the first lift in the TV station in Pyrite Town, you'll be ambushed by Cipher Peon Torkin.

Duskull, Ralts (Psychic)
You'll run into these two Cipher Peons, Lobar and Feldas, one right after the other as you close in on Netts. Lobar has a posse of Dark Pokémon that includes Duskull, while Feldas has Kadabra, Vigoroth, and Flaffy, backing up his Ralts.



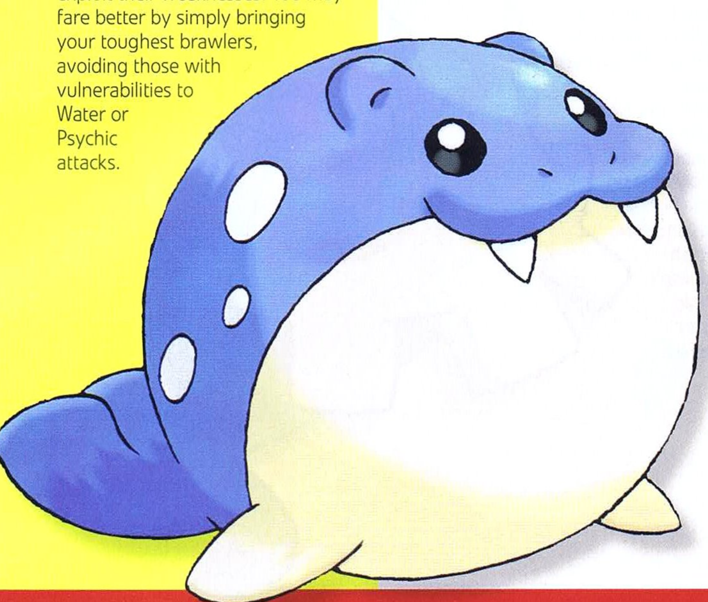
Shellder (Water)
Head south from the Pokémon healer in the top half of the Cipher Lair, then push the box to reveal a new room. Inside, you'll be ambushed by Cipher Peon Gorog, who counts a Shadow Shellder among his five Pokémon.

Natu (Psychic/Flying), Roselia (Grass/Poison), Meowth (Normal)
After you talk to Perr in Gateon Port, head down the bridge behind him until you reach Casual Guy Cyle on the island at the end.



Lunatone (Psychic/ Rock)
Cipher Admin Snattle is the last challenge in the Phenac Colosseum, and he's packing a powerful posse of potent Pokémon (hee hee hee).
In addition to his Shadow Pokémon, he's got Lanturn, Quagsire, Castform, and Metang.

Since Snattle's got such a varied team of Pokémon, it's difficult to field a team of your own that'll exploit their weaknesses. You may fare better by simply bringing your toughest brawlers, avoiding those with vulnerabilities to Water or Psychic attacks.

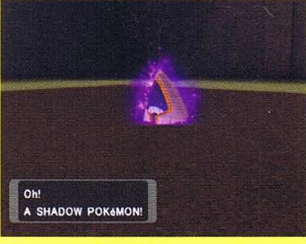


Zangoose (Normal)
After you've regained the Snag Machine, return to the Cipher Lab to beat the snot out of Zook. He'll obligingly give you a second crack at his Zangoose which you fight outside Flurrie's house.



Swinub (Ice/Ground)
When you reach the Phenac Colosseum, you'll run into Cipher Peon Greck. He's packing this Shadow Pokémon, as well as Torkoal and Nuzleaf.





Snorunt (Ice)
Phenac City has been abandoned. Check the second house on the right for the CD, then give it to the girl in mayor's house. Go upstairs and read the note on the bed.

Mawhile (Steel)
Exol, the Cipher Cmdr at the end of the TV station, is packing Mawhile. While not a real threat, his Griafarig most certainly is. Bring a Fighting-type Pokémon, such as the Makuhita you possibly have just Snagged, to neutralize Griafarig. The rest of Exol's Pokémon aren't up to much, but don't try to use status attacks against his Raichu. It has Static, so it'll just bounce them straight back at you.

TIPS EXTRA
CONTINUED...

SET SKILL LEVEL
Y, X, B, Z and Left.

UNLOCK ALL LOTS
X, B, Left, X, Up and X.

SSX ON TOUR

PASSWORDS
Go to the Extras menu, select Cheats and enter these passwords.

ALL CLOTHING
FLYTHREADS

ALL LEVELS
BACKSTAGEPASS

ALL MOVIES
THEBIGPICTURE

EXTRA CASH
LOOTSNOOT

INFINITE BOOST
ZOOMJUICE

MONSTER TRICKS
JACKALOPESTYLE

STAT BOOST
POWERPLAY

SNOWBALL FIGHT
LETSPARTY

UNLOCK CHARACTERS
ROADIEROUNDUP

UNLOCK MITCH KOOBSKI
MOREFUNTHANONE

UNLOCK NIGEL (ROCKER)
THREEISACROWD

POKÉMON XD: GALE OF DARKNESS

Capture all the little Pokémon



Spearow (Normal/Flying), Grimer (Poison)
Both the open side doors in the Phenac Colosseum lead to the same room, where you'll have to fight two Cipher Peons, Ezin and Faltly, one right after the other. They're both carrying Shadow Pokémon, in the order listed.



Beedrill (Bug/Poison), Pigeotto (Normal/Flying)
Cipher Peon Lok is waiting for you just past the sun door in the top half of the Cipher Lair. He's another duellist with a pair of Shadow Pokémon.



Paras (Bug/Grass), Growlithe (Fire)
Our first opponent with more than one Shadow Pokémon shows up in the Cipher Lair. Humah's got himself a tag-team of Paras and Growlithe, which can be lethal unless you too are fielding Shadow Pokémon.



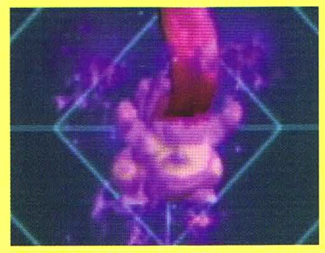
Nosepass (Rock)
Unfortunately, your second bout with Miror B takes place when you don't have the Snag Machine. You'll have to KO his Nosepass now, and go after him during the post-game tournaments.

As usual, Miror B is pursuing a theme. This time, it's Water/Grass-types. Use Fire-type attacks to drop them, then break the Nosegrass with Water/Grass-type attacks of your own.



Farfetch'd (Normal/Flying), Alteria (Dragon/Flying)
Your last encounter on the first floor of the Citadark cave is Lovrina, who's re-equipped herself. This time out of the box, she likes status attacks; expect to see Poison, Attract and Confuse used frequently.

Drop her first contenders, Gardevoir and Gorebyss, with Dark and Electric attacks, respectively. Bite and Thundershock are obvious and effective choices. Her Roselia goes down as easily as it did last time, leaving you with the Shadows to deal with. Neither of them will go down quickly, so use Confuse or Sleep status ailments to slow them down while you whittle away at their HP.



Likitung (Normal)
After you head up the lift in the Hooks and Holes section of Citadark, turn left and grab the yellow hook, then go left again and grab the pink hook. You'll find a chest. Open it, then grab the red hook and go south. Take the lift, then hang a right to run into Cipher Peon Geftal.



Mawhile (Steel)
Exol, the Cipher Cmdr at the end of the TV station, is packing Mawhile. While not a real threat, his Griafarig most certainly is. Bring a Fighting-type Pokémon, such as the Makuhita you possibly have just Snagged, to neutralize Griafarig. The rest of Exol's Pokémon aren't up to much, but don't try to use status attacks against his Raichu. It has Static, so it'll just bounce them straight back at you.

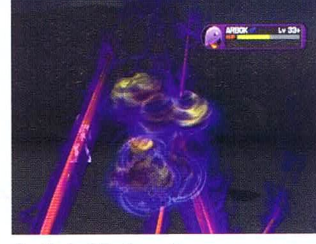


Magneton (Electric/Steel)
Cipher Peon Snindle will ambush you when you go to claim the System Lever.



Primeape (Fighting), Hypno (Psychic)
Another obstacle you'll face before you can get out of the Cipher Lair is an angry Cipher Admin Gorigan, who's toting a powerful assortment of Pokémon. The last two cards in his hand, so to speak, are the Primeape and Hypno Shadow Pokémon.

Your first priority is taking out his Lairon before it uses Earthquake too often, using Water, Fire, or Ground-type attacks. Water Gun, for example, is ideal. Dispatch his Sealeo with a Fighting-type like your Makuhita, then bring out fast fighters like Espeon to whittle away at Slowking. Once both Primeape and Hypno are on the field, swap out your current Pokémon for a pair of Shadows, then whittle both of Gorigan's Pokémon down with status attacks. We like Confusion.



Arbok (Poison)
As you're trying to escape the rapidly self-destructing Cipher Lair, Cipher Peon Smarton will come after you.



CRASH TAG TEAM RACING

JAPANESE CRASH
Press B, X, B, X at the Main Menu.

X-MEN LEGENDS 2

Enter these at the review menu screen

UNLOCK ALL COMICS
Right, Left, Left, Right, Up, Up, Right, Start.

UNLOCK ALL MOVIES
Left, Right, Right, Left, Down, Down, Left, Start.

PROFESSOR X
Complete all of the Danger Room missions.

DEADPOOL
Complete the game.

IRON MAN
Collect four homing beacons per act to collect a piece of Iron Man's armour. By Act 5, once you've found all the beacons, go and save Iron Man.



Tangela (Grass), Butterfree (Bug/Flying)
Another one of the ubiquitous ceiling Peons, Targ, will attack you with this pair of Shadow Pokémon as you forge onward through the Cipher Lair.

Rapidash (Fire), Magcargo (Fire/Rock)
In the upper Magma Chamber, take a left at the intersection and follow the path up. You'll run into Kolest, whose last two Pokémon happen to be elusive Shadows.

Golduck (Water), SableEye (Ghost/Dark)
You'll wind up in a battle with Navigator Abson relatively soon after your arrival on Citadark Isle.

Dodrio (Normal/Flying), Raticate (Normal)
In the cave in Citadark, your second automatic battle will be with Chaser Furgy, who's got two Shadows to deal with.

Swellow (Normal/Flying), Electabuzz (Electric), Snorlax (Normal)
These Shadow Pokémon represent half of Cipher Admin Ardos's team.

Lugia (Psychic/ Flying)
Grand Master Greevil will sic the Lugia on you before he challenges you himself. This is a very good place to use a Master Ball, as otherwise, Lugia will tear you apart. Even if it doesn't, it'll probably put you in a big enough hurt-locker that Greevil can finish the job himself.

Magmar (Fire), Pinsir (Bug)
You'll find these two in the Magma Chamber. After you use the block you pushed to clear the lava, you'll run into a Cipher Peon before you reach the next door.

Poliwrath (Water/ Fighting), Mr. Mime (Psychic)
In your rematch with Cipher Admin Gorigan, he'll field these against you.

Hitmonchan (Fighting), Hitmonlee (Fighting)
You'll run into Karbon and Petro in the upper Magma Chamber. Despite their names, they're big fans of Fighting-types, like these two Shadow Pokémon.

POKÉMON XD: GALE OF DARKNESS

Capture all the little Pokémon



Scyther (Bug/Flying), Chansey (Normal)
After your third lift ride, go down the passage between the two pits at the end of the hall. Leden the Cipher Peon is hiding here.

Dugtrio (Ground)
When you reach the Citadark Underpass, you'll find Kolax the Cipher Peon right at the bottom of the lift.

Dragonite
Once you've caught all 82 other Shadow Pokémon, return to Gaeton Port. Miror B will appear in the middle of town with a crew of 57th-level, Water-wielding Ludicolos… and the final Shadow Pokémon in the game.

Venomoth (Bug/Poison), Weepinbell (Grass/Poison)
Cipher Peon Angic is guarding the control machine in the Cipher Lair.

Manetric (Electric), Salamance (Dragon/ Flying), Marowak (Ground), Lapras (Water/Ice)
It's worth building a full team of strong, half-purified Shadow Pokémon to take on Cipher Admin Eldes with. Since he's got four Shadow Pokémon on his team, the Shadow attacks will be coming on strong, and you'll want appropriate resistances to avoid being caught in the crossfire. You'll encounter him straight after you ride the lift in the Citadark Underpass.

One of the bigger handfuls in this fight is Eldes's Ninjask, which is both fast and capable of using Dig. Consequently, it's usually nowhere near the fight. You may want to leave it alone unless it's about to emerge, in which case you should set a slow Pokémon up to gobsmack it right after it pops up.

Solrock (Rock/Psychic), Starmie (Water/Psychic)
You can swipe both of these during your boss battle with Cipher Admin Snattle.

Rhydon (Rock/Ground), Moltres (Fire/Flying), Exeggutor (Grass/ Psychic), Tauros (Normal), Articuno (Ice/Flying), Zapdos (Electric/Flying)
These six Shadow Pokémon represent the final challenge of the game, as you take on Greevil to defeat Cipher for good.

Whatever you've got on your team at the start of the match had better be whatever you're planning to use. The first chance they get, Greevil's Pokémon will use Shadow Hold to prevent you from tagging your boys out.

Status attacks and Shadow Pokémon are your best friends in this fight, especially if you want to Snag any or all of Greevin's Pokémon. It's also not a bad idea to bring Lugia in, as it's on an even keel with Greevin's more powerful contenders. Use its sheer power to overcome and weaken frontline fighters like the Rhydon and Tauros, setting them up for a Snag. Sleep, Paralysis, and Confusion also work well here, taking Greevin's Pokémon out of the game or minimizing the threat they pose. The game's not quite over yet, though…

Kangashan (Normal), Banette (Ghost)
One of the first battles on the second floor of the Citadark cave is with Litnar the Peon, who's packing these two Shadow Pokémon.

NOTTA CAUGHT 'EM ALL?

If you were unable to find one of the hidden Shadow Pokémon or if you defeated one by accident, there's still hope! Enter the tournaments throughout the world and fight your way to the finals. Miror B will frequently appear in the enemy rotation, and whenever he shows up, he'll bring a Shadow Pokémon you don't have.

Of course, you'll need to take on Miror B at least once to reclaim his Nosegrass Shadow Pokémon.

TIMEWARP



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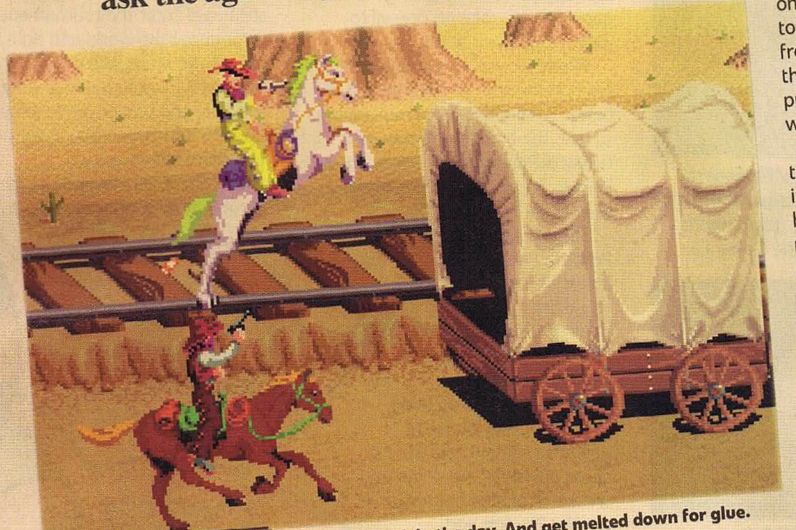
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THE FAMILY TREE

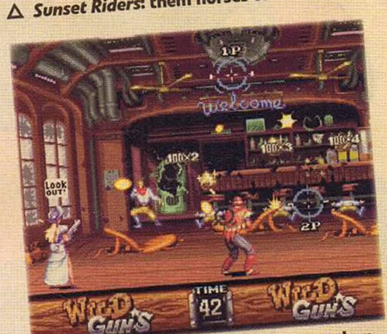
The sordid history of today's biggest games.

West Side Stories

This month... As *Gun* does the Cowboy bebop, we look back to the Wild West and ask the age-old question: what colour *should* a cowboy's trousers be?



Sunset Riders: them horses could leap back in the day. And get melted down for glue.



Guns don't get much wilder than when they're attached to a walking killer robot.

WILD GUNMAN (NES, 1984)
As immortalized in *Wario Ware*, it's the game that thinks duels begin with your opponent screaming "FIRE!" when he's about to unholster his pistol. With more time, Nintendo's clueless coders would have got the bipedal horse sheriff in, too.

COWBOY KID (NES, 1991)
Sure, sure. Despite some rousing hoedown music that made us slap our thighs until they were red and sore, it's hard to believe this was always intended to be a Wild-West-'em-up. Unless it's history that's wrong about the whole cowboys/samurai swords thing.

SUNSET RIDERS (SNES, 1993)
Just to be clear, the title screen to this Konami side-scroller showed four silhouettes riding horses towards a big setting sun. The effect was only slightly ruined by the cowboys in pink hats and skin-tight yellow leather trews.

This cart was part of Konami's brutal side-scrolling offensive of the '90s, where if a game wasn't shunting you to the right, you had your telly the wrong way up. *Sunset Riders* was more *Contra* than *Turtles*, though: enemies trotting onto the screen from every corner only to be mown down by the gush of bullets from your fire hose-like pistol. Plenty of that sunset riding business too, plus a puzzle element: namely, working out why the horse had green hair.

Every Wild West box was proudly ticked in *Sunset Riders*. Rolling barrels into the bad guys? Check. Hero twirling his gun around his index finger? Yes ma'am. Injured cowboys somersaulting over balconies? Yee-ha! You even got unpleasant native American stereotypes for your money ("Me ready for pow-wow!"), and your hero actually *sprinting* on top of a column of rampaging steers.

In fact, *Sunset Riders* earns its place in our heart solely on account of the family of chickens that desperately tries to flap its way to safety when the stampede starts. Given the health pickups that littered the levels – roast chicken dinners – we assume they didn't make it.

AN AMERICAN TAIL: FIEVEL GOES WEST (SNES, 1994)
Videogame version of the hopelessly cute movie that pit cat and mouse against each other in frontier America. Best summed up by the online review we found: "I think it would be cool if Capcom made a crossover of *An American Tail* and *Street Fighter*."

WILD GUNS (SNES, 1994)
In the mould of forgotten shooter *Cabal*, this was a thoroughly normal Wild West blast – right up until the point where the walking robot missile launcher turned up. You could change the colour of your trousers, too. Coincidentally, that's *exactly* what *Sunset Riders* needed.

TOY STORY 2 (N64, 1999)
Well, it's got a cowboy in, right?

Gaming Family Trees, A Definitive Guide 1009

RETRO NEWS

News rounded up from the wild world of retrogaming.



LINK MEETS LYLAT

Emerging from what seems to have been a five-year safari through the *Zelda: Ocarina of Time* cart, brave adventurers have struck code gold: there's a fully-working *Star Fox* Arwing lurking in Link's first N64 adventure. It flies, it spins, it lasers up Link and explodes in a fountain of fire if you bung a boomerang at it. The only concerning thing was its puny dimensions: until we realised that if a toad was indeed piloting this thing, it's just about right.

CHIP DIN

The biggest names in chiptunes – ie making music with old consoles like the NES and Game Boy – came together in New York in October for a show entitled The International Chiptune Resistance. Described as "an unprecedented mass deployment of high-volume, low-res beats, melodies, and tones", it involved bands like 'M-,-n' and 'Johnny Beverly 1989: noteNdo' (not made up), all twizzling with old Nintendo consoles and making the kind of music that your parents just wouldn't understand. Having said that, you'll have to ask your dad who this 'Kraftwerk' fella is that they're planning a tribute to.

■ www.8bitpeoples.com/resist

FAME GAME

By now, you'll know which games and 'notables' have been voted into the Walk of Game – videogaming's me-too equivalent of the Hollywood Walk of Fame. Link, Mario and Shigeru Miyamoto were honoured with their own pavement slabs last year, and this year *Donkey Kong*, *Tetris* and Samus Aran were among the longlist of nominees. There was stiff competition, though – not least from Atari, who put out a cheeky press release "encouraging" their fans to "cast their votes once a day for *Pong*." We'll rant about how Atari isn't the *real* Atari another day.

■ www.walkofgame.com



NET TENDO

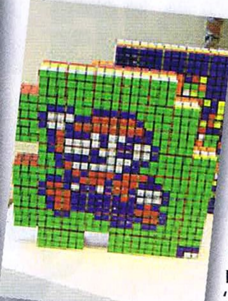
Nanones



Regular readers will be familiar with Ben Heckendorn, the man who can't so much as look at a console without violating it with his soldering iron. This month, he's been busy building the 'NES Micro', a handheld of his own devising inspired by Nintendo's tinification adventures. Unlike the GB Micro, though, it plays full-size NES carts, which hang embarrassingly out of the top of the machine making you a prime target for a happy slapping on the bus. Ben promises to make a similar bit of kit when the next Game Boy arrives. Someone get that man a girlfriend.

■ www.benheck.com

Mario Cubed

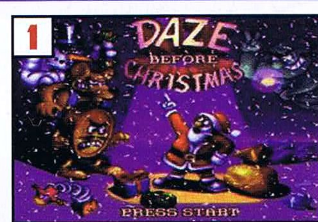


This is from an art exhibition that took place back in July, but which only hit national consciousness (ie the internet) this month. French artist 'Invader' is well-known for sticking pixelated mosaics of Space Invaders around big cities – we saw one when we were guzzling coconut milkshakes at the AMC Coffee in Covent Garden, in fact. But his recent exhibition at LA gallery 'sixspace' featured a handful of non-Invaders pieces: including this Mario made entirely of Rubik's Cubes: 25 cubes stuck together and priced at $1000. Something tells us the normal laws of maths do not apply.

■ www.sixspace.com/gallery/invader2005

FIVE Things

Festive Nintendo games – ho ho ho hum… hum… humbug.



DAZE BEFORE CHRISTMAS

So *this* is what Santa does if you've been naughty not nice. He pelts your face with fireballs and winds you with a sack of toy to the stomach.



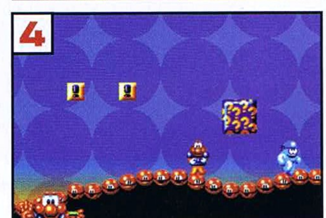
SWORD OF MANA

Not all that Christmassy for the most part – until Rudolph turns up and tells you that Santa's turned himself into a giant frost monster. Don't tell the kids.



SANTA CLAUS JUNIOR

He's a merry gift-giving dude with a rad purple hairstyle and a straight-talking attitude to Christmas that's totally in yer face! Get it out of our sight.



JAMES POND 2

Santa's been kidnapped, the toys are out of control and for some reason, only a walking fish can save Christmas. He calls himself 'Robocod', you know.



BANJO-KAZOOIE

The true meaning of Christmas: a great big Christmas Tree, presents for all good bears and sinister snowmen throwing snowballs so hard we went and told teacher.

RETRO TAT

We've given Banpresto the month off

We were privileged enough to briefly invade the personal space of this lovely and limited *Centipede* fossil watch this month. It's a purely cosmetic retro treat – the image of the age-old coin-op is on a loop, and bears no relation to the movement of the hands. But with a presentation box, brushed silver case and *that* Atari logo, it's got to be worth $130, right? That must be why Atari won't let us take it home… er, give it away to one lucky reader. Pah. Our free Rice Krispies watch does us *just fine*.



WRITE IN!

Have you found something that's turned old Nintendo into a new money-spinning gift? Tell us and we'll name and shame it in these very pages.
Email ngc@futurenet.co.uk

THIS MONTH IN NINTENDO

This month, eight years ago – **N64 Magazine, Christmas 1997**







△ **Complete the game and you still had 75% of *DKR* left to go. Bummer.**

△ **Conker used to be such a mild-mannered squirrel. It was probably hanging around with that Timber that turned him.**

DIDDY KONG RACE MEET
December 1997 • Official Program

GAME OF THE MONTH
DIDDY KONG RACING
NINTENDO 64

Hovercraft adventure racing with an alchoholic lion. Those were the days…



WHAT'S THIS? Kart racing with an adventurey vibe, a pre-swears Conker, Diddy Sodding Kong, and a tiger who, from the look of his eyes, had clearly been at the medicine cabinet.

THE BIG DEAL: After *GoldenEye* and *Blast Corps* had shown it was gods rather than humans who walked (or probably floated) the corridors of Rare HQ, we were counting on them to knock *Mario Kart* off the track. It was big all right – like our massive *16-page* review – but so uncompromisingly tough that reviewer James Ashton got slapped with a noise pollution fine for excessive swearing. Still: 90% and "just a smidgen off 'Classic' status".

THE OFFICIAL LINE: "This unique game blends adventure and racing like no other game! Roam anywhere… by car, plane or hovercraft!"

WHAT HAPPENED NEXT? Having suffered the indignity of being kept off the top of the charts by *FIFA: Road to the World Cup*, *DKR* only got a pseudo-sequel (*Banjo Pilot*). Probably just as well: we've just noticed that Timber the Tiger had pretty scary *eyebrows* too.

AND: *DKR* was announced by Rare just three months before its release. We developed our instinctive hatred of Pipsy the Insufferably Cute Mouse almost immediately.

Everyone was playing...

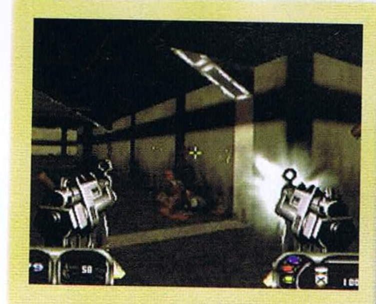
EXTREME G
NINTENDO 64




△ Look at all those polygons! We used to salivate over stuff like this. △ Underground tracks were cursed with 180-degree turns.

Who can honestly say they don't fancy the idea of riding a motorbike round town, brandishing a nuclear missile?

The first instalment in what eventually became Gamecube's *XGRA*, *Extreme G* was the N64's answer to PlayStation racing celeb *WipEout*. Its big selling point was speed – the kind of ludicrous speed that could rival a roadrunner on steroids – and all with futuristic space motorbikes pelting here there and everywhere, reacting to would-be overtakers by showing them the sharp end of a nuclear missile. The use of the *Turok* 3D engine was overambitious – when a war of the weapons erupted, the visuals slowed to about one frame per month – but despite that, *Extreme G* earned itself a cult following all the same.



OTHER REVIEWS THIS MONTH

Duke Nukem 64
Infamously bad-taste shooter has its mouth soaped by Nintendo.
86%

Chameleon Twist
Tongue-waggling adventure, and clearly *not* a chameleon.
70%

Puyo Puyo 64
The invincible bean-matching puzzle game, dressed up like 1991.
80%

Worst game...

J-LEAGUE ELEVEN BEAT
NINTENDO 64




Oh my, but this is soccer for the slothful… Reviewer Tim claimed that the players in this interestingly-named Japanese footy sim "never really care whether they get to the ball first or not." And this is hardly surprising when you actually look at them: there's not a single one who hasn't eaten all the polygon pies and then some. Meanwhile, the ball bounced around like it was on a rubber string held by a bored God who'd much prefer cricket to be on the telly. Not that that made it difficult to score – in tune with '90s soccer videogame law, all you had to do was approach the goal diagonally and put the boot in.

Other news...

Old news, tastefully repackaged



EASTERN EYE

N64 Mag's "An Englishman in Tokyo" column taught readers the Japanese for "No, that's the turkey over there" and explained that, in a country where the little baby Jesus isn't a celebrity, children get strawberry and cream cakes for Christmas.



THE NAME'S (NOT) BOND

The launch of the stellar *GoldenEye 007* was cause for celebration at electronics store Comet: their first-class promotional picture managed to pull together a bloke who looked a bit like Jaws, two anonymous girls (one seemingly with a broken neck) and Pierce Brosnan's stuntman.



SPACE WHIRLED

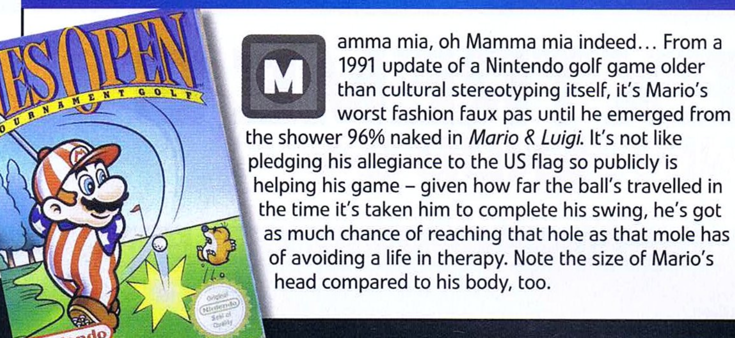
N64 Mag itched with excitement at Nintendo's annual and inexplicably entitled Spaceworld show (which has since been consigned to the videogame expo rubbish bin). We predicted that the doomed 64DD would be the show star, along with *Super Mario 64 2* and a *Mario Kart* sequel. Nope, nope and nope.



NGC CLASSICS

Bring back the memories – or fill in the brainholes with new ones.

CLASSIC BOXART
NES OPEN TOURNAMENT GOLF (1991)

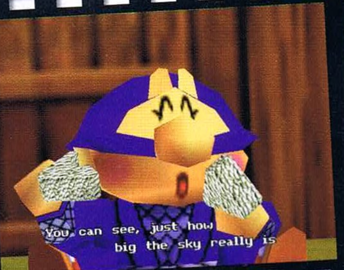


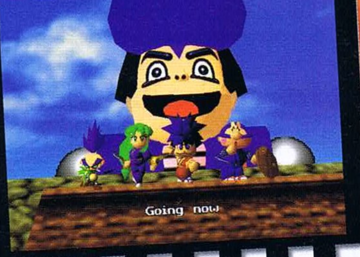
Mamma mia, oh Mamma mia indeed… From a 1991 update of a Nintendo golf game older than cultural stereotyping itself, it's Mario's worst fashion faux pas until he emerged from the shower 96% naked in *Mario & Luigi*. It's not like pledging his allegiance to the US flag so publicly is helping his game – given how far the ball's travelled in the time it's taken him to complete his swing, he's got as much chance of reaching that hole as that mole has of avoiding a life in therapy. Note the size of Mario's head compared to his body, too.

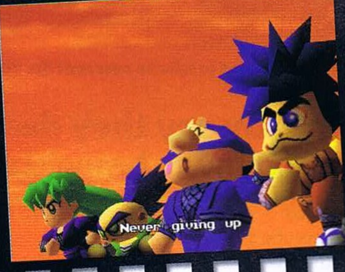
CLASSIC CUTSCENE
MYSTICAL NINJA STARRING GOEMON (1997)

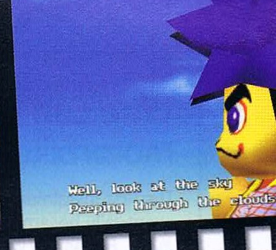
Ah, we miss Goemon, the game hero apparently based on a real person – we bet you couldn't move in Edo Period Japan for pipe-carrying maniacs wearing hair like an explosion in a blue factory. This was by far Goemon's weirdest game, with a bewildering musical intro cut-scene, based on the poem that the real-life Goemon wrote in 1595 while awaiting execution by boiling oil. Fact!











CLASSIC COCK-UP
GOLDENEYE 007 N64 (1997)

Back in the N64 Magazine days, enterprising camera-owning readers snapped the N64 equivalent of the Yeti – the eternally charismatic and photogenic *GoldenEye 007* guards (such as the Russian chap pictured here) with faces where other bits of their head should be. If memory serves, one terrified reader sent us a shot of a *Resident Evil*-rivalling multi-limbed monster, at which point we remembered that *GoldenEye*'s troops were supposedly modelled on actual Rare staff members. That's Twycross for you…



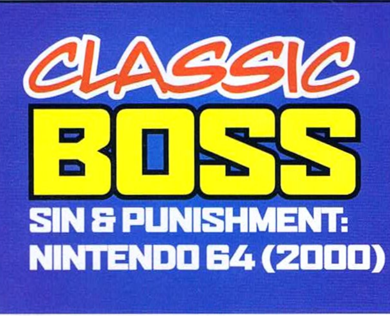
△ **Actually, the *normal* faces of the guards were quite freaky enough on their own. Weird eyes...**

CAREER GRAPH: Piranha Plant
Old big mouth strikes again.





CAREER GRAPH • CAREER GRAPH • CAREER GRAPH • CAREER GRAPH • CAREER GRAPH • CAREER GRAPH • CAREER GRAPH • CAREER GRAPH • CAREER GRAPH

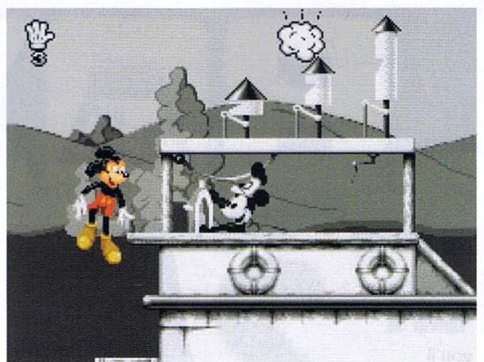


CLASSIC BOSS
SIN & PUNISHMENT: NINTENDO 64 (2000)





This import-only Treasure blaster wasn't subtitled 'Successor to the Earth' for nothing. The ins and outs of the plot still evade us – our Japanese skills only enabled us to work out how to start the game after 17 minutes of random button pressing and three kicks of the table – but the dénouement clattered through all known language barriers. Basically, you had to fight the Earth: an evil version of the Earth that was very angry. The oddest thing: destroying an entire planet wasn't as tough as *Ikaruga*.







△ Nintendo's most powerful box at the time, churning out shades of grey.

CLASSIC LEVEL
MICKEY MANIA
SUPER NINTENDO (1995)

It's been a while since old big ears starred in a decent non-handheld game – both *Hide and Sneak* and *Magical Mirror* gave us the best night's sleep we'd had in years. Mickey's adventures are probably better if you're still in training pants but, back in the day, his games weren't just for kids.

Like every Disney platformer, *Mickey Mania* was a marathon of left-to-right run-and-jumping, with the occasional "I'm being chased by a wild moose!" 3D bonus stage. But this one had a unique twist: Mickey was *platforming through time*, taking in an entire career of cartooning. And it was *tough* – dodging exploding skeletons required the kind of joypad dexterity that would snap a seven-year-old's fingers clean off.

No problem, though, as the first level was the only bit worth playing anyway. It had modern-day Mickey scampering around a brilliantly-realised recreation of 1928's "Steamboat Willie". The contrast between the technicolour mouse and the black-and-white world was stunning, and they cracked the vintage Disney feel.

Best bit: the paradoxical Back to the Future-style moment where you tapped the original Mickey on the shoulder, and he scurried off petrified. That's the first thing we'll do when time travel's invented, too. That and becoming our own granddad.



LOST CLASSIC
FACEBALL 2000: GAME BOY





First-person view, simplistic mazes, roving players firing bullets at each other – *Faceball 2000* gave birth to the deathmatch concept on SNES and Game Boy well before *Doom*. In fact, with a maze full of dismembered floating happy faces, it was probably *more* sinister than Id's classic – and getting proper 3D mazes moving around on Game Boy was tantamount to piloting a Volvo to the moon. As for its other influence: we actually barricaded ourselves in our houses until October 2000 in fear of the new century bringing death-happy faces to our door.



30 MONMOUTH STREET/BATH/BA1 2BW

MAILBOX

STAR LETTER

If you send us the best letter of the month, you'll receive a shiny new Gamecube (or GBA/DS) game from our bulging sack of shiny new games. Lovely.

"Custom village"

How about having a new version of *Animal Crossing* built inside the Revolution? You would be able to access it by switching on the Revolution without a game inside, and you could use your custom village to access all the settings and go online, allowing you to download old games and play them on your virtual console.

Maybe there could be some kind of place (a virtual train station or something) working pretty much like Pioneer 2 in *PSO*, where you can meet people from all around the world, allowing them to visit your village, if you like, ready for some online gaming in your virtual house.

Also in this central hub there could be some kind of shop, in which you will find new items to decorate your village and games or demos released from time to time by Nintendo. It might even work like some kind of Star Catalogue, only with unlimited items, and it would be miles better than those VIP Rooms they created a while ago.

Andrea Garino, Italy

Wow! What a truly wonderful idea. We can only hope that Revolution's 'home' button takes us somewhere as magical as Animal Crossing, rather than just to a selection of menu screens.

Strangely enough, this reminds me of something Rare were going to make a few years ago, with a kind of garden that grew and evolved depending on which games you bought and how much you played them. If I remember correctly, the whole thing sprang from one of Shigsy's discarded ideas, so it's pretty likely there's something even more unusual planned for Revolution. Ed

Bonus Letters

I'd imagine that's one of the most sycophantic paragraphs you've ever read.
Michael Southorn, Bristol
Well, it certainly comes close. Ed



Is this genuine? Or legal?
Patrick Johnson, Cardiff
Probably neither. Ed

I just know there is a big fat seventy percent waiting at the door for these titles.
Alasdair Henry, Morpeth
Well, I might just insult you and call you the new optimist of the year. But you may also be correct. Ed

Nothing, nada, zip! What happened?
Peter Hodgson, St Helens
I have no idea. Ed

I myself find that it's not about the graphics, it's about the games.
Graeme Rafferty, Mintlaw
For me, it's not about the cottage cheese, it's about the Marmite. Ed

EMAIL US!

Got something to say? Run out of stamps? Guards won't let you near a pen? Then log on to the interweb and 'get' us 'at'…

ngc@futurenet.co.uk

Include your name and address so we know who to credit the letter to. Do it! Do it! Do it now!

"Phat"

I hate how videogames are becoming 'cool' nowadays. Games like *The Urbz, SSX Tricky* and *FIFA Street* are hollow attempts at turning what used to be a noble, sexless pastime into something more trendy to appeal to 'da kidz'.

Videogames aren't about impressing shallow youths with phat moves, copycat fashion and hip 'trax'. They are about munching dots, jumping on Goombas, and killing orcs. If people want rap music and baggy jeans, sod off to MTV Base and leave gaming to those of us who are less shallow. Videogaming should be a chance for people to escape a material, image-obsessed culture, but instead it is going the way of the music industry. Can you imagine today's tracksuit-wearing teens in their modded-up Novas wanting to be seen playing *Pac Pix* or *Nintendogs*? I doubt it.

Image shouldn't be a part of gaming, since it only taints the experience – witness the none-too-favourable reviews of *The Urbz* and *Need For Speed Underground* as evidence of this. And yet this hasn't affected their sales. How long before the market becomes saturated with this kind of drivel? The less fashionable Nintendo Gamecube has already been consigned to a couple of shelves in the dark, far corner of my local games shop.

So to hell with fashion. This gamer will be sitting in this evening drinking a cold beer in his non-branded clothing, driving around Rainbow Road in an oversized barrel.

Kevin Wallis, Rainham

Fair play to you – you know what you like and you're not going to fall for glitzy marketing campaigns. But it's a fact that people do want games with fast cars, licensed brands and chart music – it's all about gaming becoming mainstream. A negative review will have no impact on the sales of a mainstream title because the majority of people who buy them will never read games magazines. There's plenty of room in the games market for both the old-school hardcore and the new breed of casual gamelord. Ed



HONOURABLE MENTIONS
Thanks to everyone who wrote or emailed this month, inluding (but not limited to): Daniel Leigh, Jersey; Gilles Reuse, Belgium; Tom Charles, via email; Adam Jowitt, Leeds; David Yarrow, Chipping Norton; John McClegg and Zaki Moosa, Durham; Tony Welch, Chester; Matthew Duffell, Chorley; Elliot Kruszynski, Gloucester; Sam Rose, Bingham; Martin Grainge, Rotherham; Luke Bowyer, Cheshire; DJ Fryer, Warminster; Peter Davies, via email; Peter Gelding, via email; Graham Savage, via email; Neil Travers, via email; John Marritt, via email; Drew Longley, Manchester; Nick Adams, Nairn; Ryan Hemper, Gloucester; Jack Parker, Rhyl; Neil Goodman, East Lothian; Mark Beglin,

"Value"

In your preview of *Mario Kart DS* you said that you will be able to play eight-player *Mario Kart* "without the need to daisy chain over eight hundred quid's worth of Gamecube hardware". At the moment a DS console costs about £100, so although you don't need the Gamecubes, you will need approximately the same value of DS hardware to play with eight players.
JP Godfrey, London

Yep. Maybe we should have said that an eight-player DS session is easier and a lot more likely to happen than the equivalent on Gamecube. Ed

"Wondering"

After seeing the Revolution controller, I began wondering what some game producers saw in it I think I could guess the answers.

Namco: It's motion sensitive, and could be held in two hands, like a sword. *Soul Calibur* is a celebrated success, and that controller could easily pick up sensitive sword action – wild swings, defensive blocks, rapier thrusts. This would make weapon-based fighting more involving and interactive. A perfect game for Revolution

Capcom: Remember those light guns you get in arcades? The controller could represent a gun for blasting zombies in *Resident Evil*.

Ubisoft: What's the best way to take care of the animals and crops on a *Harvest Moon* farm? Stroking animals? Ploughing the fields? Washing the dog? Cutting down weeds?

EA: Menu control
Dom Egan, Leigh-on-Sea

I'm sure each game will feature something unique (ie I'm saying nothing). Ed

Bonus Letters

We should send in our Nintendo related songs and you can tell us what you think.
Tim Wilson, via email
I can tell you what I'll think right now, but send them in anyway. Ed

I am close to incredibly desperate.
Tommy Pitman, via email
And I am close to a brand new council estate development. Ed

In the US, there's the Nintendo Fusion Tour which combines punk rock and gaming! PUNK ROCK AND GAMING! Why does this not happen here?
Steve Collier, via email
Because we are far more civilised than that. Ed

Loving Nintendo is a bit like loving a football team.
Henrie van Meurs, Holland
What, all of them? Ed

Unless of course they actually run a farm breeding a very special breed of goat. But something tells me they probably don't.
Jonathan Barrow, via email
You're probably right. Ed

"Crazy new"

Barring first-person shooters, what game types will actually take advantage of the Revolution's crazy new controls? I've seen the teaser video: tennis, maybe, fishing… okay, but that's the definition of niche. Hammering? Only in *Wario Ware*. Platform? No way. How on earth can the Revolution controller handle platform games? I've gone over it again and again in my mind, and have concluded that it just can't happen.

I hope Nintendo know the solution, because I sure don't. Is *Mario 128* going to be the most gimmicky game in the world? Will the Revolution ever be able to play host to a *Banjo*-esque, button-heavy adventure? Probably not. According to the teaser video, jumping will require you to flick the controller upwards. Given the nature of a platform game, you'll have to be flicking that controller up every few seconds, which will no doubt cause wrist pain. Will movement be controlled by tilting, or by the thumb stick attachment?

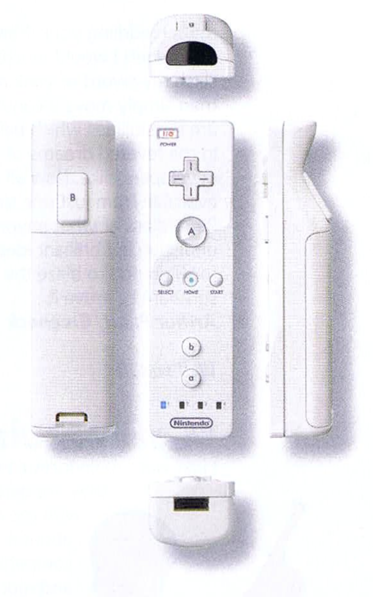
I know the idea of Revolution is to produce new game styles, but should that mean that old game styles are ignored? Nintendo had better reveal some solid details soon, or I'm going to have a mental breakdown trying to figure out how the controller will work.
Daniel Rouse, High Wycombe

They wouldn't have made the Revolution controller the way it is if they didn't have some damn good ideas for games. Like the N64's unusual controller, which was designed for Mario 64 but happened to be excellent for a number of other game styles, the Revolution controller could lend itself to all sorts of unexpected genres. Ed

"Actually tried"

Some people claim that the new Revolution controller will be gimmicky like the DS. I seriously don't believe that they have actually tried a DS for themselves. I'm a big Nintendo fan, so I'm probably a tad biased, but I sincerely doubt that anyone who has actually played something like *Wario Ware* or *Yoshi's Touch & Go* can honestly say it isn't something truly great and original.

Traditional handhelds are just too conventional for me since I started playing the DS – it's just such good fun. Somebody also told me that he didn't want to wave his arms around like a loon while playing games. Well, so help me, I do! It's certainly more interesting then just sitting



CORRECTION CORNER

In your review of *Sonic Heroes* you said that Team Chaotix were new. Wrong! I have a stack of Sonic's old comics (don't call me a traitor!) and guess who was in them…
Luke Anderson, Alton

Erm… Mario? Ed



In Issue 110's Spartan preview you talked about the reason for the Spartans' legendary defeat of the Persians at the battle of Thermopylae. Well technically they didn't win - they were overrun in the end. But they kicked arse for three days, so it was strategically a good little innings.
Stephen Mirfin, via email

Half right is better than all wrong, right? Ed

London; Jason Roberts, via email; Steven Ponting, via email; S Jones, via email; Iain Richmond, via email; Terry Anderson, Norn Iron; Jamie Fenwick, Milton Keynes; Helen Renton, Bristol; Wayne Harrison, via email; Jason Wilcox, Scott Berry, Hampshire; David Reed, Daniel Scott, Perth; Kyle Browning, via email; Edward Smith, Carlisle; Lee Penn, via email; Hugh Holden, Bedfordshire; Craig Pilkington, Sunderland; Neil Sedgwick, via email; Thomas Peel, London; Ursula, via email; Pete Wilson, via email; Jennifer Bradshaw, vai email; Gregory Kelly, via email; Ben Bishop, Grimsby; Sebastiaan Van Severen, Belgium; Bradley Pollard, Dundee; Thank you all!

there twiddling your thumbs – just ask any *Eye Toy* owner! I would much rather point my gun, slash my sword or yank at my steering wheel than simply move a control stick around. These are possibilities which beforehand existed solely in the fevered dreams of gamers and game developers alike. Now all this and more is available from just one single controller. Regardless of what anyone says, that is an undisputedly brilliant idea. Now all we need is for Nintendo to blaze the trail, making the software to prove it.
Arthur Plant, Greenock

Well said. Ed

"Congratulate"

I just want to congratulate Nintendo on the way they are getting everything right with the Revolution. Think about it: backwards compatibility, online gaming and motion sensor controls. This will offer a unique gaming experience compared to rival efforts that don't offer anything vastly different from their last console. I also want to congratulate Capcom on the excellent *Resident Evil 4*. I bought it and have now completed it twice, so well done Capcom.
James Whynacht, Alnwick



Congratulations all round then. Ed

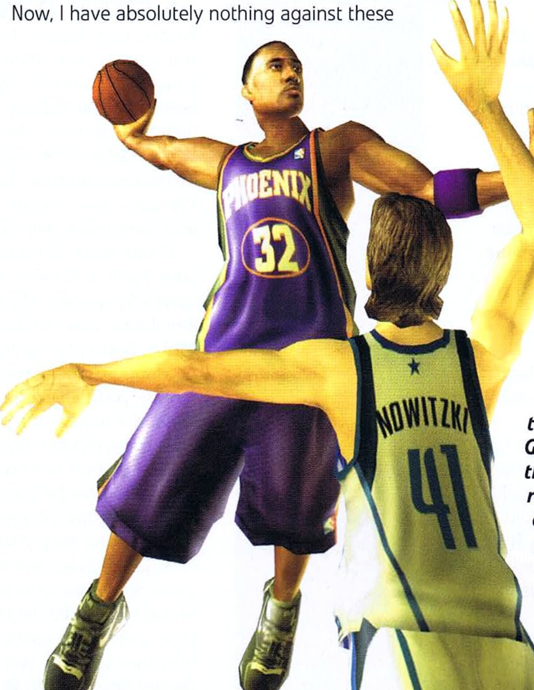
"Minority interests"

I'm writing in response to your coverage of the recent crop of EA sports titles in issue 112 and a recent advertisement on the NRL (Australian Rugby League) website for the forthcoming *Rugby League* game on PS2.

I have a bone to pick with EA. Why have they released another yearly update of their *NBA*, *NHL* and *Madden* titles on Gamecube in the UK? Now, I have absolutely nothing against these sports but they are minority interests in this part of the world.

Meanwhile, versions of EA's *Rugby*, *Rugby League* and *Cricket* titles are yet again nowhere to be seen on Gamecube. Surely these titles would have far more appeal for a UK audience and in other PAL territories, namely Australia and New Zealand, than basketball, ice hockey or American football ever could.

As far as I'm aware, Nintendo's consoles have always been part of EA's multi-format strategy. As good as *Madden* may be, it makes no sense for them to serve up another dose of American sporting action yet deny us the titles that I would actually want to buy.
Danny Rankin, Australian in Edinburgh



Personally, I'm a lot more interested in US sports than rugby or cricket, but I see your point. One of many reasons that certain sports games aren't released on Gamecube is that cricket-hating mainland Europe is the largest PAL territory, and Gamecube has a smaller user base than PS2. It isn't really viable to release a Gamecube title that will only sell in England and Australia – and even then, in small quantities. I'm afraid you'll just have to learn to love* Mario Football*... Ed

CREATIVE CORNER

This month's top arts and crafts masterpieces...

"Cute together"

Zelda and Link - they are so cute together! So why aren't there any official arts of the grown up Link and Zelda from *OoT* together?
Anne Martha Harnes, Norway

Awww. Ed



"Star Wars"

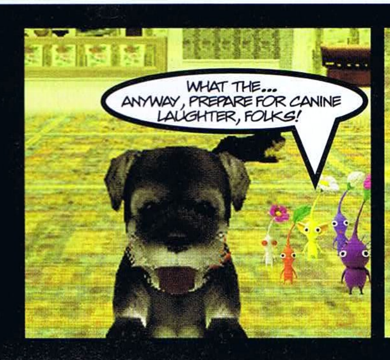
Taking inspiration from two of my favourite things – Star Wars and Nintendo – I created these. What better use for an illustration degree? Also, I know you all love Toad so much that you'd enjoy the idea of him having his head removed and connected to R2-D2's, erm, bottom bit.
Bridgette-May Booth, Alfreton

Excellent! Somebody should make this into a game. Ed



GriNtendo!

SEND US YOUR NINTENDO JOKES! MAKE THEM GOOD AND YOU WIN A GAME. MAKE THEM CRAP AND THE YELLOW PIKMIN DIES. HORRIBLY. AND IT'S ALL YOUR FAULT.
THIS MONTH: JOKE SUPPLIED BY TIM WILLIAMS.









WRITE TO... GRINTENDO, MAILBOX, NGC, 30 MONMOUTH STREET, BATH, BA1 2BW **OR EMAIL** NGC@FUTURENET.CO.UK



"Socket"

It would seem that multiplayer will be very important in the next-gen consoles, so I think Nintendo should put a headphone socket on the revolution controller so that each player hears different sounds depending on the character/location/weapon he/she is using. On the topic of the Revolution controller, it looks very cool: one handed gameplay is certainly revolutionary!
Jamys Quilliam, Isle of Man

Maybe they could include a microphone so you could still talk to the people sitting next to you. Ed

"Price tag"

Nintendo is great and I've been a Nintendo gamer since I was old enough to play the SNES. What's more, I've always loved them for doing things no-one else can do, but one thing that I don't like is that 'innovation' also includes a large price tag for accessories.

For example, do you remember the Game Boy Camera? Oh, and Printer... *Pokémon* – gotta catch 'em all! Gotta buy two games, you mean... You just weren't cool with a GBA – you needed a GBA SP! Nintendo, famous for handheld-console integration – you needed a Gamecube, a GBA, a connector cable, a GBA copy of the game, perhaps a second controller and a friend to join in the one-player fun. The list goes on...

Now we see the Revolution, which is innovative with a great controller, right? And lo, it seems as if it's going to bring with it a host of buyable add-ons that will probably be needed to fully experience many games. What was it they said again? An affordable console aimed at everyone? Yeah, right.

I can't help but think that if they do this they will alienate potential newcomers and casual gamers alike, intimidating them with the possible different variations of the already intimidating controller. I'm all for Nintendo, but when innovation comes with a price tag larger than the average man's monthly wage, no thanks.
V, Coventry

Gamecube has been the most affordable console since the day it launched, and I have no doubt that the same will be true of Revolution. Nintendo will probably include the nunchaku accessory as standard, and as for other things like toy planes or whatever, well, it's all just speculation. With the Wi-Fi features, at least you're not going to have to purchase cables to link it up with your DS or wireless network. and until they announce some actual pricing details, well, you're just inventing a problem that may never exist. Ed

SO TELL ME THIS...

Your questions fudged by the NGC pocket calculator.

Me and my friend are having a bit of a barney about how you pronounce the name of the new FPS Geist. I think it is pronounced 'jeest' but my friend thinks it is pronounced 'gIst'. Please write the name phonetically to show us how to pronounce it.
James Wright, London

Your friend is correct. Geist has a hard 'g' and a middle that rhymes with 'eye'. Is that phonetic enough for you?

1. Will Nintendo be releasing a router for the DS or an add-on to go online?
2. Is there going to be another 2D Metroid game?
Darren Greer, Belfast

1. You may well have seen the official Nintendo Wi-Fi dongle thing by now. Otherwise, any third-party router will do the trick.
2. Super Metroid is due a remake pretty soon. Other than that, there's no news.

1. Where is the cheapest place to buy Gamecube games?
2. Why do your reviews always say that the games cost £40, but at the shops they're never more than £35 – and sometimes even less?
3. How do you decide whether a game is worth 89%, 90%, 91% or whatever?
John Gooding, via email

1. Most internet sites are pretty cheap for new games, and many high street stores knock a few quid off the RRP of new releases. There's nowhere that's definitively cheaper than anywhere else.
2. We're referring to the RRP – the recommended price. Shops usually offer a discount.
3. By looking at similar games, having deep conversations about the merits of each title, weighing up the pros and cons, and then tossing a coin. It's highly scientific, you know.

"Jabberclacker"

As requested, here are my suggestions of possible new names for the Nintendo Revolution;

1. Nintendo Jabberclacker.
2. Nintendolphin.
3. Nintendo Amigo.
4. Nintendo Dimension
5. Nintendo Super Amazing Musical Universe Sponge (SAMUS).
6. Nintendo Pearly White Box With Da Pretty Wand and 3D Sticky Wicky.

Hope that helps.
DJ Fryer, Warminster

Not bad... Not bad at all. My money's on Nintendo Gamebrick, or maybe Wanda. Only time (and the next Nintendo press conference) will tell. Ed





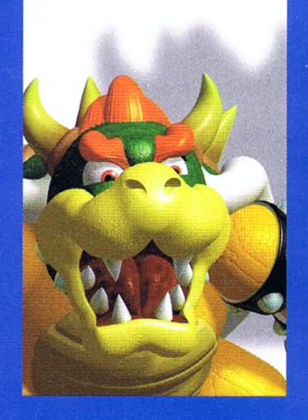
WHY YOU NEED IT!



Your up-to-date guide to the hottest PAL titles

Games aren't cheap. Even when you buy pre-owned games, it's still a bit gutting to get your bargain treasure home and find you've splashed out on a box of gaming garbage. Hence this buyer's guide – it's got:

- **Our 100 top-scoring games, listed in score order so you can begin with the very best.**
- **Details of which issue it was reviewed in, so if you want to know more you can look through your back issues. You *do* have them, don't you…?**
- **A brief description of each game, so if you don't have the relevant back issue, you can still find out the most important things about it.**
- **Highlighted games, which go into a little more detail. As the list gets updated, the highlights will also change.**

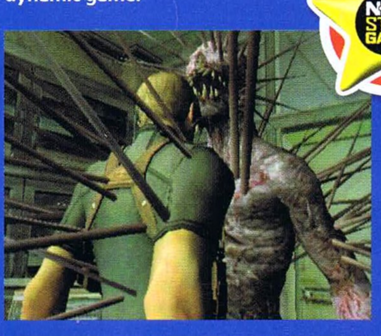


1 RESIDENT EVIL 4 — 97

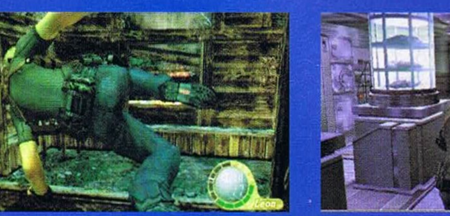
CAPCOM ■ NGC/104

What, no zombies? What's going on? Something spectacular, that's what. This instalment takes the *Resi* series to the next level, with an unprecedented level of innovation. Gone are the three-day-long animations of doors opening and in comes this new, far more dynamic game.

NGC STAR GAME









2 THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: THE WIND WAKER — 97

NINTENDO ■ NGC/81

The babbling of the internet whingers faded to a stunned silence when this hit the shelves. It's as exquisitely fashioned as a Pixar flick and doesn't lose any of the gameplay for it. Some sailing sections spoil it a bit, but this is as close to art as games have got.

NGC STAR GAME





3 METROID PRIME — 97

NINTENDO ■ NGC/76

Looks absolutely incredible and there's no slow down, despite the huge, incredibly detailed environments. The action is varied and the puzzles are mind-bending. One of the finest games you'll ever play.

NGC STAR GAME



4 SUPER MARIO SUNSHINE

96





NINTENDO ■ NGC/73

Yet again Mario shows other platform 'heroes' how it's really done – in stunning 3D, with responsive controls and an engaging story about vandalism and poisonous brown slime. Plus a giant water-filled squirty backpack. It's everything you never knew you always wanted.



5 METROID PRIME 2: ECHOES

94



NINTENDO ■ NGC/101

Another outstanding outing for Samus Aran as she switches between dimensions to save the Luminoth from the Ing. The story is enriched by the logs you find, and Samus has useful new weapons and abilities. The landscapes aren't as varied and awe-inspiring as *Prime's*, but that's our only complaint.

6 MARIO KART: DOUBLE DASH!!

93





NINTENDO ■ NGC/88

Crazy courses littered with Chain Chomps and pick-up boxes, bizarre weapons from slippery bananas to green shells, giant Yoshi eggs, and all your favourite Ninty faces doubling up to race recklessly. The AI's a bit cheaty (a shell *just* as we're about to win? Hmm…) but it's a whole lot of fun.



7 F-ZERO GX

92



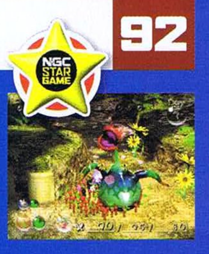
NINTENDO ■ NGC/85

This is a blisteringly fast racer that manages to keep up the pace without getting framerate jitters. You will never accept glitchy graphics again. A few more tracks would have been nice, but with editable vehicles (in addition to the 30+ that come with the game) and a Story mode, why complain?



8 PIKMIN 2

92





NINTENDO ■ NGC/99

Louie, Olimar's assistant, has shown himself to be less than efficient at managing the business. Happily, it means they've had to return to Earth for a longer session of collecting treasure, along with two new types of Pikmin to help them. Bigger, better and even more enjoyable than the original.





9 SOUL CALIBUR 2

91



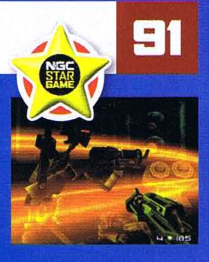
NAMCO ■ NGC/85

Excellent, fast-paced fighting. Weapon Master mode is your key to unlocking the eight hidden characters, but the real star of the show isn't hidden. Namco has dropped in Link for the Gamecube version, complete with bow and arrow. It's the best fighting game on *any* system.



10 TIMESPLITTERS 2

91

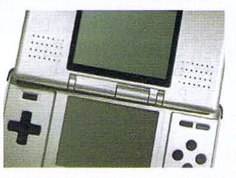




EIDOS ■ NGC/73

Travel back through time on the trail of the nefarious 'Splitters. This means shooting things. A lot. Your weapons are time-zone appropriate, letting you wage war everywhere from the Wild West to the near future. The multiplayer is the icing on the cake. You will love every second of this.

TOP TEN GBA GAMES





1 ADVANCE WARS 1 & 2

Cute-looking turn-based strategy with a frighteningly addictive, super-challenging core. Honestly, it's better than it sounds. *AW2* is essentially *Advance Wars 1.5*, but it's tweaked to perfection.

2 WARIO WARE TWISTED!

Takes the template laid down by *Wario Ware*, then adds a tilt-sensitive cartridge. You'll play it until you're sick.

3 WARIO WARE

Imagine the simple graphics and gameplay of Game & Watch fired at you in five-second bursts. Loopy fun that you'll keep coming back to.



4 MARIO & LUIGI: SUPERSTAR SAGA

An RPG with puzzle and platform elements, starring our two top plumbers.



5 THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: A LINK TO THE PAST

One of the most memorable outings for Link (alongside *Ocarina of Time*). Comes with bonus *Four Swords* multiplayer adventure.



6 SUPER MARIO ADVANCE 2

This tweaked version of the SNES classic boasts a massive game world and some of the tightest level design ever.



7 POKÉMON RUBY & SAPPHIRE

The same structure as before – catch 'em all and send 'em into battle – but still the most entertaining RPG out there.



8 MARIO KART SUPER CIRCUIT

Nabs the best bits from the SNES and N64 versions and, if you've got four friends, GBAs and cables, they can play too.



9 METROID FUSION/ ZERO MISSION

Everything that has ever made *Metroid* great can be found in these two games: a sprawling environment littered with enemies and an imposing level of difficulty.



10 GUNSTAR FUTURE HEROES

Treasure make old-school shooting seem like the freshest thing on earth.



DIRECTORY

The best Gamecube games around

11 SUPER SMASH BROS MELEE — 91

NINTENDO ■ NGC/68

All your Nintendo favourites get together for a phenomenal ruck across a whole range of game worlds. Think Samus could beat Mario? Or that three Jigglypuffs are better than one Link? You'll have ludicrous amounts of fun proving it, by yourself or with friends.



12 HARVEST MOON: A WONDERFUL LIFE — 91

UBISOFT ■ NGC/91

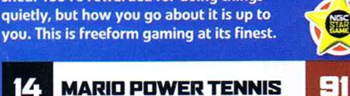
Romance the ladies, keep cows and grow veggies as the seasons change. Despite a new chapter structure, this farm sim loses its way a little when you've got your bride and have few new goals apart from hybridising crops. Well, such is life, but at least you get to do a bit of milking.

13 HITMAN 2: SILENT ASSASSIN — 91



EIDOS ■ NGC/82

Bald, barcoded assassin 47 comes out of retirement and takes on the bad guys with a range of weapons. Not bad for a bloke who spends his time in a shed. You're rewarded for doing things quietly, but how you go about it is up to you. This is freeform gaming at its finest.



14 MARIO POWER TENNIS — 91



NINTENDO ■ NGC/104

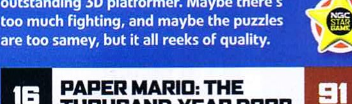
If you stick with it and learn the ins and outs of the power shots, you're left with an incredibly tactical game. It levels the field, making it a stage where the most seasoned veteran can take on the most casual gamer and still have a closely fought match.

15 PRINCE OF PERSIA: THE SANDS OF TIME — 91



UBISOFT ■ NGC/90

Ubisoft shows other developers how to update classic games without ruining them, as the brilliant 2D platformer gets transformed into an outstanding 3D platformer. Maybe there's too much fighting, and maybe the puzzles are too samey, but it all reeks of quality.



16 PAPER MARIO: THE THOUSAND-YEAR DOOR — 91

NINTENDO ■ NGC/100

With Mario's papery ability to fold himself into a paper plane or turn sideways to become nigh-invisible, plus a great fighting mechanism and rippable scenery, this is a brilliant example of Nintendo doing what it does best – creating unique games.

17 WAVE RACE: BLUE STORM — 90



NINTENDO ■ NGC/67

A few tiny framerate problems hamper the PAL version of this aquatic racer, but it is still a fabulous game. It's convincingly speedy and looks wonderful – the water effects will leave you staggered. The controls are intuitive and effective. In short, this is absolute magic.



18 BATTALION WARS — 113



NINTENDO ■ NGC/113

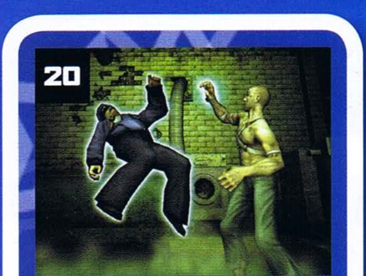
With all the hallmarks of the brilliant *Advance Wars*, *Battalion Wars* perfectly balances action with strategy. Commanding armies over vast, detailed landscapes with total control, you'll be thoroughly addicted by the awesome gameplay and vibrant graphics.

19 VIEWTIFUL JOE — 90

CAPCOM ■ NGC/84

Some people love the unusual look, some people hate it. Either way, get past the cel-shading and this 2D-yet-3D beat-'em-up impresses. Elements like speeding up and slowing down time during battles only add to the feel. It can be frustrating, but it'll win you over anyway.

20 SECOND SIGHT — 90



CODEMASTERS ■ NGC/97

Excellent psychic stealth-'em-up. Who are you? Why are you here? All will be revealed – if you survive. Telekinetic powers produce some intriguing gameplay and the compelling plot and quality cutscenes fully engage you. Immaculately produced, the levels are tightly designed, while its distinctive style makes it a truly memorable game.

21 METAL GEAR SOLID: THE TWIN SNAKES — 90

KONAMI ■ NGC/91

A superb stealth/action adventure with a healthy pedigree. A great story combined with revamped graphics make this old PlayStation title blossom on the Gamecube. With superb voice acting and music, this is a good game that should be in your collection.

22 BURNOUT 2 — 90

ACCLAIM ■ NGC/80

The best realistic racer on Gamecube. It looks great and it's wonderfully fast. And then there is the crashing. When you've had fun roaring around the streets, you can beat up your car in the most spectacular manner possible. Accessible and entertaining.

23 WARIO WARE INC: MEGA PARTY GAME$ — 90



NINTENDO ■ NGC/97

A quickfire succession of hilarious five-second minigames are blasted at you and up to three friends. With tasks like nose picking, cat poking and banana peeling, it's original, outlandishly quirky and very good fun. This comes thoroughly recommended, but not by cats.

24 PHANTASY STAR ONLINE 1 & 2 — 90



SEGA ■ NGC/78

This online RPG will devour huge chunks of your life. Get ready for lots of menu screens, numbers and bashing crates. Note: 1) you'll need a broadband adaptor to play online – good luck finding one. 2) Third-party memory cards are prone to corrupt with this.

TOP FIVE PLATFORM GAMES



SUPER MARIO SUNSHINE
This is a tour-de-force of everything that good gaming should be. An absolute delight.

PRINCE OF PERSIA: THE SANDS OF TIME
An innovative time-rewinding twist and excellent puzzles make this essential.

PRINCE OF PERSIA: WARRIOR WITHIN
Good looking with trickier puzzles and, ahem, more 'mature' content.

LUIGI'S MANSION
Luigi buys a mansion and finds it's haunted. It's a little easy, but you'll enjoy every second.

DONKEY KONG JUNGLE BEAT
Simply put, it's bongo brilliance.

TOP FIVE RACING GAMES



MARIO KART: DOUBLE DASH!!
Single-player mode looks as cute as ever, but it's rock hard.

F-ZERO GX
Expertly crafted arcade fun that rockets along.

WAVE RACE: BLUE STORM
Classic Nintendo action with dazzling water effects.

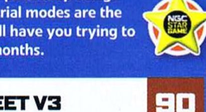
BURNOUT 2
Fast car racing combined with steel-crunching pile-ups.

EXTREME G 3
The weapons are what make this future racer shine.

25 1080° AVALANCHE — 90

NINTENDO ■ NGC/89

More of a racer than a trick-based snowboarder, although jumps, spins and flips are all there. Short courses and a fair bit of pace keep things feeling tight. The time trial modes are the best bits – Gate Trial will have you trying to shave seconds off for months.



26 NBA STREET V3 — 90

EA ■ NGC/104

Think *Space Jam* meets *NBA Jam* meets EA's *NBA Street* and you're pretty much there. For the Gamecube incarnation, EA heaped in a load of Nintendo characters. This is entertaining arcade basketball with all the quirks of Nintendo. What more do you need?



27 ANIMAL CROSSING — 90

NINTENDO ■ NGC/98

Ever fancied leaving home and living in a town populated by animals? The full cartoon farming experience can now be yours, complete with N64 graphics and strange noises. Somehow, improving your house, filling the museum and getting a life prove very addictive.



28 SKIES OF ARCADIA LEGENDS — 90

SEGA ■ NGC/81

Vast boat-based RPG ported from the Dreamcast. "It'll change your life," our RPG fanatic assures us. The black holes in the universe of your quest for missing moonstones are stuffed with the usual RPG battling, puzzle solving and shopping, although it looks a bit dated now.



29 CONFLICT: DESERT STORM 2 — 90

SCI ■ NGC/86

Set during the first Gulf War, this team-based shooter is better than the original *Conflict: Desert Storm*. There's a completely new aspect to this one – you're not allowed to let any of your men die, which leads to all sorts of heroics when you try to save your team.

30 WORMS 3D — 90



SEGA ■ NGC/87

You know the score. You have four worms which must kill other worms. *Worms* was one of the few survivors of the 16-bit era to escape the 3D revolution, but here it is, finally. The special weapons are still crazy (sheep, the Holy Hand Grenade), but the real difference is that, being in 3D, it is now harder to hit your targets, affecting your strategies to make for improved worm-slaughter.

31 ETERNAL DARKNESS — 89

NINTENDO ■ NGC/74

A horror that sees you playing as a dozen different characters to fight off a dark, shambling evil. As you see more, your sanity meter falls, and when that drops to the bottom… There are a few weaknesses in the combat but, other than that, this is survival horror that spans 20 centuries and is nearly perfect.

32 LEGEND OF ZELDA: FOUR SWORDS 89
NINTENDO ■ NGC/102
This is an obscure *Zelda* game that's pretty hard on the pockets – in multiplayer mode, each of the four players needs a GBA and link cable. Nonetheless, it's great fun, very amusing and would have scored more highly if the best bit of the Japanese version – *Tetra's Trackers* – had been included.

33 RESIDENT EVIL 89
CAPCOM ■ NGC/72
Compelling survival horror. Play as Jill if you want to take things gently, Chris if you're feeling hardcore, then immerse yourself in this puzzle-solving, zombie-battling frightfest. There's a bit of backtracking and the puzzles are a tad annoying, but they don't hamper it too much.

34 SPLINTER CELL 89
UBISOFT ■ NGC/81
Only Sam Fisher and his various high-tech gadgets – like sticky bombs and camera disruptors – stand between terrorists and the Free World. It's the usual stealth-'em-up stuff, but done with a fair degree of flair and polish, although the 'three alarms and you're out' rule can become annoying.

35 CONFLICT: DESERT STORM 89
SCI ■ NGC/80
This is a rare breed: a multi-platform release that is about as far from the 'lazy port' title as you could possibly hope. This version has been fully optimised for the Gamecube. *Conflict: Desert Storm* is great fun and intensely tactical. The multiplayer is cracking good fun as well.

36 SSX 3 89
EA ■ NGC/87
Snowboard around one giant mountain, entering races or showing off tricks. Complete all three peaks and you'll get the chance to spend 15-30 minutes tricking your way down to the bottom. The framerate can be glitchy, and it's not quite as free-roaming as it initially seems, but it's a superb game.

37 DONKEY KONGA 88
NINTENDO ■ NGC/99
Drum along to a soundtrack, following the symbols on-screen for left bongo, right bongo, both bongos or clap. It's the sort of game that almost anyone can pick up and play. It's also completely addictive and tremendous fun. Despite the extra bongos costing £20 a set, the multiplayer makes it worthwhile.

38 PRINCE OF PERSIA WARRIOR WITHIN 88
UBISOFT ■ NGC/102
The Prince is older and his game's got more 'mature' (so, scantily-clad ladies and smart-arsed comments have been dropped in). It's still great to look at and great to play, with trickier puzzles than the first game, and although the fighting is a bit dodgy, the rest of it more than outweighs that problem.

39 TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 2005 88
EA ■ NGC/98
This is a big game. You'll probably find lost tribes in there if you play for long enough, though you won't see them if you have other interests, you know, like a job or a life. More ball control, famous opponents, the ability to create your own golfer, 14 courses (11 of them new)… You can't get bigger or better than this.

40 LUIGI'S MANSION 88
NINTENDO ■ NGC/67
The most annoying thing about Luigi's own adventure is that it's too darn short. Apart from that, his escapades in the newly-acquired haunted house play like a combination of *Super Mario World* and *Ghostbusters*. The little man in the green hat has done himself proud with this one.

TOP FIVE FIGHTING GAMES

SOUL CALIBUR 2
Gorgeous Link-fuelled beat-'em-up from Namco.

SUPER SMASH BROS MELEE
All your favourite Ninty types, pounding each other's faces in: just what we've always wanted!

VIEWTIFUL JOE
Absolutely spectacular 2D-yet-not-2D side-scrolling single player fighter.

DEF JAM: VENDETTA
The wrestling game that appeals to non-grapple fans as well.

VIEWTIFUL JOE 2
There's more of the same inventive gameplay, without any substantial changes to the successful formula.

TOP FIVE SHOOTING GAMES



METROID PRIME
Tough as nails shooting-heavy sci-fi adventure.

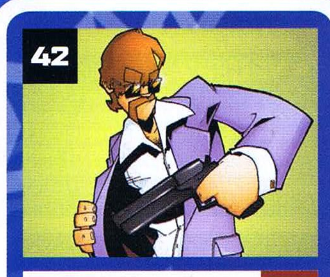
METROID PRIME 2: ECHOES
Samus Aran takes on the deadly Ing in this solid sequel.

TIMESPLITTERS 2
Classy first-person shooting from the *GoldenEye* boys.

TIMESPLITTERS: FUTURE PERFECT
A great update, though not the revolution that was promised.

STAR WARS ROGUE LEADER
Looks great and the ropy on-foot sections of the sequel are no more.

41 SUPER MONKEY BALL 88
SEGA ■ NGC/67
The first ingenious update of the old classic *Marble Madness* sticks monkeys in balls and rolls them around bizarre landscapes, collecting bananas. Minigames include obvious ball games like pool and golf, oddities like a tilting boxing ring and even a monkey version of *Mario Kart*.

42


TIMESPLITTERS: FUTURE PERFECT 88
EA ■ NGC/105
This wasn't the revolution that was promised. Instead it just gave *TimeSplitters 2* a bit of a spring clean and a rethink. The game has been gorgeously designed, with some expansive levels. It's packed with juicy extras and the Story mode is a lot more cohesive as a single-player game. The trademark humour is in place and, while not being original, there's plenty of fun to be had and the multiplayer is still great.

43 NBA STREET V2 88
EA ■ NGC/84
This is basketball with EA's successful *Street* template. You just don't need a serious basketball sim in your collection – this one is stacks of fun, and unless real-life stats are your thing, *NBA Street* has got it all. Three-on-three action, combos and special moves – all this is crammed into a very fun game.

44 DONKEY KONGA 2 88
NINTENDO ■ NGC/108
A second chance to get tendonitis. The songs may be cover versions, the menus may be pretty poor and there aren't enough minigames, but this is more of the same bongo and beats action that we all loved the first time around. Just don't play Solo mode in a crowded room: you'll look like a moron.

45 NHL 2006 88
EA ■ NGC/112
EA has made some big changes this time around, taking the arcade-friendly approach that made the *NHL* series such a hit in the first place back on the Sega Mega Drive. We loved it then, and we love it now – with real-time ice trails, the ice has never looked so good.

46 DONKEY KONG JUNGLE BEAT 87
NINTENDO ■ NGC/103
Get the bongos out, it's time to change your gaming habits. Gone are the days of using the D-pad for platformers. Who needs them when you've got bongos? This might sound odd, but it all makes sense in practice. Be warned: you'll need a Radox bath to soothe your aching arm muscles by the end of it.

47 MADDEN NFL 2005 87
EA ■ NGC/99
The main change to this instalment is the inclusion of the hit stick, which lets you decide how much physical impact your tackles have. Apart from that, and a few tweaks to defensive plays and franchise mode, it's pretty much business as usual, with all the usual stats and player updates you'd expect.

48 DEF JAM: VENDETTA 87
EA ■ NGC/82
Famous rappers get together to give wrestling games a kick up the booty. Start off as a rookie and fight your way through the likes of DMX, Redman and Ludacris, then you'll have the pick of the ladies – though their blokes won't be too happy. Need we mention the great hip-hop soundtrack?

49 TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 3 87
ACTIVISION ■ NGC/67
Absolutely stinks of PS2 – go on, smell it – but it's such good fun that it doesn't really matter. You'll find masses of grinds, stunts and a huge range of locations. Come on guys, this is Tony Hawk – before he got in with Bam Margera and started clowning around in cars. You know exactly what this is like…

50 LOST KINGDOMS 2 87
ACTIVISION ■ NGC/81
Although nowhere near as good as *Zelda* and *PSO*, *Lost Kingdoms 2* is a beautiful looking card-based RPG – statophiles are going to love building up their decks, collecting new cards to add to it and crunching numbers. It's nicely broken up into a series of small and easily digestible pieces.

51 STAR WARS ROGUE LEADER 87
LUCASARTS ■ NGC/68
Without a doubt the best *Star Wars* game on Gamecube, both in the way it looks and the way it plays. Take part in the battle of Hoth and whizz your ship down the trench to destroy the Death Star. Note: the whole thing has since been included as a two-player co-op game in *Rogue Squadron III*.

52 VIEWTIFUL JOE 2 87
CAPCOM ■ NGC/105
The original *Viewtiful Joe* wowed us all with its original mixture of 2D and 3D fighting. This instalment is more of the same in terms of gameplay, but there have been some slight tweaks, like the inclusion of Sylvia, a new playable character whose different FX powers alter the style of the puzzles.

53 BEYOND GOOD AND EVIL 86
UBISOFT ■ NGC/90
Wonderful looking action adventure which has you finding rare animals and tackling an alien invasion. The visuals are stunning and the speech and effects make the grade, too; even the minigames are fun. The world is huge and detailed, but it is slightly easy and won't last as long as you'll want it to.

54 FINAL FANTASY: CRYSTAL CHRONICLES 86
SQUARE ■ NGC/91
Multiplayer RPG for up to four players, but each one will need a GBA and link cable, making this expensive if you're to play it properly. The order in which you pick up spells can be a bit random and the players' shared air bubble can be claustrophobic, but all in all this is good looking and ambitious.

55 WARIO WORLD 86
NINTENDO ■ NGC/83
Punching, pounding, portly fun. That's fun with a capital F (and U and N). The meths-swilling anti-Mario gets his very own game, and it's every bit as mad as you'd expect. Gather garlic to boost your strength and embark on a (too short) escapade that combines platforming and fighting. Wah-hah-haaaa!

56 BURNOUT 86
ACCLAIM ■ NGC/67
This was a killer racer in its day, but was massively improved upon by its sequel. Despite the spectacular crashes, inch-perfect handling and smooth framerate, we'd still recommend you buy *Burnout 2*, because it's got all that and so much more. *Burnout* itself is worth a look though, and won't disappoint.

DIRECTORY
The best Gamecube games around

57 BILLY HATCHER AND THE GIANT EGG 86
SEGA ■ NGC/87
Bright and bouncy, you'll have the 'la-la-la' theme tune stuck in your head for days after playing this bizarre, very Japanese platformer. Were it not for the annoyingly glitchy later levels and the poor camera, this would be a classic. Who'd have thought rolling an egg around could be so much fun?

58 PIKMIN 86
NINTENDO ■ NGC/80
Only Shigsy could have come up with a real-time strategy game set in a garden. Olimar's first visit to Earth is a resource-management revelation. You have 100 Pikmin to carry out your commands as you try to rebuild your ship before you run out of air. It looks as wonderful as it plays, but it's just too short.

59 XIII 86
UBISOFT ■ NGC/88
Unusual graphics, cel-shaded characters and scenes, plus comic-style effects (there are guns that literally go 'bam'...) set this FPS apart from the gun-toting crowd. Your sixth sense and a bit of stealth help to vary the pace, and when that's all over there's a great multiplayer mode.

60 POKÉMON XD: GALE OF DARKNESS 113
NINTENDO ■ NGC/113
Pokémon XD is about 'snagging': filling your Pokédex with 'mon, snatched from other trainers during battle. Sounds simple, but the strategic combat is as addictive as ever and beautifully realised. A must for Pokémon fans.



61 NFL 2K3 86
SEGA ■ NGC/79
Possibly not as much fun as *Madden*, owing to the amount of work you have to put in to get your 11 bruisers playing together effectively. However, the enormous franchise mode and great sound and graphics make this a decent enough game of American football, if a tad out of date.

62 THE LORD OF THE RINGS RETURN OF THE KING 86
EA ■ NGC/87
Orc-slashing, goblin-gutting goodness featuring your favourite film fellowship. With more playable characters than *The Two Towers* (notably, Gandalf is now in the mix), this decent hack'n'slash takes you from Helm's Deep through to the defeat of Sauron at the Crack of Doom via some nifty spider action.

63 NBA LIVE 2004 86
EA ■ NGC/88
Underneath the polished EA Sports surface lies the expected, impressively deep layer of substance. The licensed music and players are supported by a strong bedrock of stats, facts and character creation tools. Overall control has been improved and you've got more offensive options. It's soulless but slick.

64 RESIDENT EVIL ZERO 85
CAPCOM ■ NGC/78
Controlling two characters (Rebecca and Billy), you shoot your way through the usual hordes of zombies and monsters, solving puzzles to progress. Great cutscenes and in-game visuals mean this looks a treat, and it's got bags of the old *Resi* atmosphere (a coppery, bloody, fear-filled atmosphere then...).

65 MARIO GOLF TOADSTOOL TOUR 85
NINTENDO ■ NGC/95
For a *Mario* game there's a surprising lack of Ninty-ness in many of the courses – it's just not as wacky as we'd like. And there's plenty of room for sensible in, say, *Tiger Woods*. That aside, it's easy to pick up the controls and the graphics are crisp and shiny. Plenty of modes and unlockables add longevity.

66 IKARUGA 85
ATARI ■ NGC/80
Its toughness is the stuff of legend, even on the easy setting. Your little spaceship fires white and black projectiles, and you have to hit the black and white nasties with their opposite colour. There are only five of the well-designed levels, but it will take you a while to see them all. Splendid space crusade.

67 FIFA 2004 85
EA ■ NGC/87
Continuing the healthy rivalry between *FIFA* and *Pro Evo*, *FIFA 2004* is the best football sim on Gamecube (unless you import *Winning Eleven* from Japan), with around 400 licensed, face-scanned players, teams and stadia. The free kick system's been tweaked, and the corner kicks are menu-driven. It's all here.

68


EXTREME G 3 85
ACCLAIM ■ NGC/67
This is an underrated gem. It's very, very fast and the tracks are huge, sprawling and well-designed. The bikes are super-cool and the inventive weapons are suitably stunning to use, but this was the case with its predecessors. What's new this time round is an upgrade system, with bike and weapon enhancements available from the XG Mall. This adds a much needed tactical element to the game: thrill seekers will love it.

69 SPLINTER CELL CHAOS THEORY 84
UBISOFT ■ NGC/106
This was the game that was supposed to give the *Splinter Cell* series a kick up the arse; unfortunately that didn't happen. What did happen was a thorough spit and polish job – for example, the levels are no longer linear – and as a result it feels much fresher. The addition of a co-op mode is also very welcome.

70 SPIDER-MAN 2 84
ACTIVISION ■ NGC/96
Here is a game that actually makes you feel like a superhero. Freely swinging through an enormous city, you'll feel the joy of being Spider-Man, doing whatever a spider can. The only drawbacks are that it doesn't look particularly pretty and the missions are quite limited. But it's still an amazing experience.

71 KILLER 7 84
CAPCOM ■ NGC/109
Capcom's highly original, inventive and downright weird adventure is certainly interesting. You play Harman, the man with a squad of deadly assassins inside his head. You can choose between seven of his different personalities – each with their own specific abilities – in your quest to defeat the Heaven's Smiles.

72 JUDGE DREDD: DREDD VS DEATH 84
VIVENDI ■ NGC/89
Dredd Vs Death sees the famous Mega City One come to life. Sadly, it's not an especially *long* life. While it lasts you get to play as ol' chinny himself: solving crimes, nailing crooks and eventually tracking down the Dark Judges. The setting and story are spot-on and the fiddly controls are the only let-down.

TOP FIVE ADVENTURE /RPGS



ZELDA: THE WIND WAKER
Phenomenal. A reason to own a Gamecube in itself.

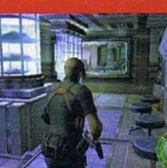
HARVEST MOON: A WONDERFUL LIFE
Not your traditional RPG; this is an endearing, farming treat of a game.

TALES OF SYMPHONIA
A beautiful and epic RPG with the best battle system on the Gamecube.

PHANTASY STAR ONLINE
A number-cruncher that turns epic with a bit of t'internet.

SKIES OF ARCADIA LEGENDS
If 'classic' RPGs are your bag, this boy'll be a sackful of joy.

TOP FIVE ACTION ADVENTURE



RESIDENT EVIL 4
Cranks up the action, taking the *Resident Evil* series to new heights.

HITMAN 2
Compelling assassin sim that kills the competition dead.

SECOND SIGHT
Brilliant psychic stealth-'em-up from the team that brought you *Timesplitters 2*.

MGS: THE TWIN SNAKES
Beautifully updated version of Solid Snake's first outing.

ETERNAL DARKNESS
Dark, psychological horror – exclusive to Gamecube.

73 POKÉMON COLOSSEUM 84
NINTENDO ■ NGC/93
The Pokémon series gains an RPG! Your task is to save the Shadow Pokémon from Darkness and destroy the powers of the people corrupting the poor critters. There's an awful lot of fighting here and you'll need a GBA Pokémon game to get the most out of Colosseum mode. If you're a fan, you'll love this.

74 TALES OF SYMPHONIA 84
NAMCO ■ NGC/100
This is very much a traditional RPG, and a very good looking one at that. The characters are beautifully designed and the locations are all, without exception, stunning. The only downer in the visual stakes is the relatively ugly overworld. The rubbish, clichéd dialogue will have you gnawing your arm off, too.

75 RAYMAN 3: HOODLUM HAVOC 84
UBISOFT ■ NGC/78
Rayman somehow manages to create a fun platformer, despite the fact that he seems to be stuck in an age when this kind of thing was revolutionary. But it's bright, it's solid and it's got some enjoyable minigames. It doesn't get boring and the difficulty curve is scaled just right.

76 ISS2 83
KONAMI ■ NGC/68
This series was untouchable for a while, but then EA found out and made its *FIFA* games loads better, leaving the GC *ISS* behind in its wake. *ISS2* is a good game with great game commentary, but we were expecting much more of it and unfortunately these expectations weren't met.

77 STAR WARS REBEL STRIKE 83
LUCASARTS ■ NGC/88
Star Wars is all about screaming TIE fighters and taking on Star Destroyers, not poncing around on foot. The on-foot sections are a bit of a trudge and they ruin the excitement of the rest of the game. But it looks and sounds great, and the two-player *Rogue Leader* is outstanding.

78


SERIOUS SAM: NEXT ENCOUNTER 83
TAKE 2 ■ NGC/94
Don't be fooled by the name, this is very silly indeed. For £20 you can spend hours gunning down wave after wave of brightly-coloured aliens across a range of historical locations. Okay, the killing can get a bit relentless, but for a bit of blasting fun, Sam's your man. Forget about stealth and fancy gadgets, none of this matters when you have 20 monsters of varying types running at you. *Serious Sam* is about *serious* fun.

79 BATEN KAITOS 83
NAMCO ■ NGC/103
Role-playing adventure with card-based battles. This game is unique and delivers a wonderful, magical and fantastical world – the stunning vistas, towns and interiors are awash with lavish colours. Even the card system works well. Unfortunately it is let down by some stilted and painfully wooden voice acting.

80 FREEDOM FIGHTERS 83

EA ■ NGC/86

Although much less serious in tone and delivery than *Conflict: Desert Storm 2*, this is still a highly enjoyable squad-based third-person shooter. Unfortunately, there are some issues with controls, but if you look beyond this you'll find an absorbing and, most importantly, fun game.



81 FIFA 2003 83

EA ■ NGC/75

After years of annual statistic and slight gameplay tweaks, this was the turnaround for the *FIFA* series. Having had the football crown stolen by *Pro Evo*, EA sought to re-establish themselves as the kings of the footie game. The result was a remarkably in-depth and well presented game of football. Along with the correct names and kit, the movement of the players and flow of the game are vastly improved.

82 SPARTAN: TOTAL WARRIOR 82



SEGA ■ NGC/112

You take control of Spartan, a conveniently named Spartan warrior, as he sets out to dismember every single Roman in the world. With up to 200 people on-screen at any given time, this is hectic, violent and bloody, and just how war should be. With historical accuracy put to one side, this is great fun.

83 TONY HAWK'S UNDERGROUND 2 82

ACTIVISION ■ NGC/100

This time the graphics have a more cartoony feel, and Story mode unfortunately features a lot of Bam Margera, so if you find him annoying, there's a good chance you won't like this. The rest is great, keeping the classic *Tony Hawk* gameplay and including parts of the first three games – with a timer!

84 SUPER MONKEY BALL 2 82



SEGA ■ NGC/78

If games teach you one thing, it's this: out of balls, monkeys probably carry guns and want you dead. Inside balls, however (a monkey's natural habitat), the little creatures are an absolute delight. The format is the same as the first in the series, and there are new minigames and over 100 levels.

85 METAL ARMS: GLITCH IN THE SYSTEM 82

VIVENDI ■ NGC/88

As hard as Ray Winstone in a steel top hat, this robot shoot-'em-up is tough right from the training level. You take control of a small yellow robot called Glitch, and your task is to defeat a rock-hard army of robots. The camera can be awkward, though, and the landscape hazards are unfairly harsh.

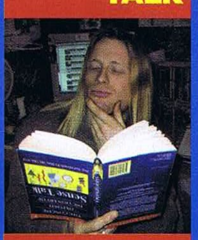
86 PHANTASY STAR ONLINE EP III: CARD REVOLUTION 82



SEGA ■ NGC/94

This is a new idea and a new direction for *PSO* card-based battling. You now have to choose a side (the Arkz or the Heroside) and do battle with dice and cards. It's best if you are familiar with the original *PSO* though and, unfortunately, you will need a broadband adapter to play.

PAUL'S SENSE TALK



BYE THEN

I never thought the day would come, but sadly I have to switch off the sense-talk engine. I am flying the roost, in favour of a life of buying cheap brandy at 9am, and shouting at tramps.

SENSE-TALK

Sense-talk has had some great people unwittingly contribute in the past. People like EA's daddy, Trip Hawkins, international beefcake, Jean Claude Van Damme, and even international super-idiot, George Bush. Ahh... the good old days. But sadly, all things come to an end. I know the saying is actually 'all good things come to an end', but I'd never admit to have been good at it.

NGC

Having worked on N64/NGC for close to six years now, I will be leaving with a very heavy heart. I can easily say that during my time here, I've have had the most fun and fondest memories of my working life. I thank the guys for providing an environment to insult, and be insulted on almost every level possible, ranging from mothers and haircuts, to accusations of campness. Thanks guys, and I'm sorry Geraint, about the elastic bands and basketball/coffee cup 'incidents'. To explain, and to give one last sense-talk, 'Friday afternoon's over-enthusiasm always ends in tears'.

Who's gonna listen to my crap now? Answers on a postcard...

87 THE SIMS: BUSTIN' OUT 82

EA ■ NGC/89

Having spent the previous game imprisoned in their own home, this instalment sees your virtual people released into the real world to work. It still doesn't exactly look brilliant and or sound that great, but as with all games which have no absolute goal or plot, it will last you for a very, very long time indeed.

88 NFL STREET 2 81

EA ■ NGC/103

This game tears up the rulebook and gives you licence to run like hell, boasting a new ability that lets you run around the walls *Prince of Persia*-style to gain height when catching or passing a human pile-up. A quality package, though probably without mass appeal outside the US.

89 OCARINA OF TIME MASTER QUEST 81

NINTENDO ■ NGC/80

This game is nothing short of a bargain. Although the graphics haven't been updated that doesn't mean that the gameplay isn't up to scratch. This version has tougher dungeons and different puzzles from the original *OOT*. Forget the graphics (it's an old game) and immerse yourself in Rinkydink's earlier outing.

90 TIGER WOODS 06 81

EA ■ NGC/112

Tiger Woods' almost perfect swing system has had a few tweaks for 2006. The ball is now controlled by the C-stick and putting is now on the analogue stick. Despite being tricky to get used to, the classic *Tiger Woods* gameplay remains intact, making this one of the best golf sims available.

91 AGGRESSIVE INLINE 81

ACCLAIM ■ NGC/72

A top class rollerblading sim. Having wheels that stay attached to your feet when they're off the floor means that you can pull off moves like swinging around lampposts. There's even a Career mode. On the negative side, the soundtrack is rubbish and the graphics are a little bland.

92 THE SIMS 81

EA ■ NGC/79

Your Sim has to do all the things a real person would: leave home, make friends, find a partner, eat, sleep and go to the lav. Yet it's all done in a bizarrely addictive way. There's no point to it and there are no objectives, but that's life for you – entirely meaningless, but you want to keep doing it anyway.

93 F1 CAREER CHALLENGE 81

EA ■ NGC/83

Ever wanted to indulge in the life of an F1 driver? Now you can. This is a part of EA's *F1* series, but with the addition of an extensive Career mode. There are a series of trials to prove you can handle the F1 disciplines, then you can get on with the racing part, which looks good, shifts well and handles nicely.

94 NHL 2005 80

EA ■ NGC/99

This is a slick, quick game of hockey. The action's quick and the AI and graphics have been improved, but if you dislike the sport there simply won't be enough here to convince you that it's worthwhile. For the fans though, it's easy to learn and you can rack up huge scores. Good fun.

95 MORTAL KOMBAT: DEADLY ALLIANCE 80



MIDWAY ■ NGC/77

The fighting system's been vastly overhauled from earlier *MKs*, although it's far too easy to get an infinite by button mashing. The lack of ring-outs and stage-specific finishers is disappointing. Still, you've got three fighting styles per character, a ton of unlockables and loads of gore. Best with two players.

96 BALDUR'S GATE: DARK ALLIANCE 80

VIVENDI ■ NGC/81

Endlessly battling goblins and orcs can get a little tedious, but if you've ever played D&D you'll enjoy levelling up and spending your EXP. However, it's a lazy port from PS2, with slowdown and a jittery framerate. Nonetheless, the game still looks a treat and one level has you beating up cowardly lions.

97 PAC-MAN VS 80

NAMCO ■ NGC/90

This tiny gem is free, but only when you buy another, inferior full-priced title (*R: Racing Evolution*). While *Pac-Man Vs* isn't particularly complex, the four-player mechanic works well. Think of it as a trifle to have fun with between serious gaming sessions. You'll need a GBA and link cable to play it properly.

98 DEF JAM: FIGHT FOR NY 80

EA ■ NGC/99

Following on directly from the end of *Def Jam: Vendetta*, this is yet another wrestling/rap crossover that will appeal to fans of both genres. The wrestling is slickly executed and there's a massive amount of unlockables and extras to keep you occupied. Unfortunately, the framerate isn't great.

99 MARIO SUPERSTAR BASEBALL 80

NINTENDO ■ NGC/113

Filled with mini-games and fun little missions in the middle of play, *Baseball* has been given the full Nintendo treatment. With tactical pitching and a hard batting system to learn, the game is awesome in multiplayer.



100 LEGO STAR WARS 80

EIDOS ■ NGC/113

Lego Star Wars confirms that a mute Lego man can act better than Hayden Christensen. Basic as it is, the game is very entertaining, using the different skills of all the major characters and is immensely playable. Effortless fun.





FREE!

Exclusive Nintendo Christmas tree decoration

This beautiful work of art brings the finishing touch to any tasteful Christmas display. Imagine this angelic amalgam of two of Nintendo's best loved characters, sitting proudly atop your tree…

Friends, you're imagining the best Christmas ever!

This festive centrepiece is not available in any shops, other than the one where you bought this magazine and maybe a couple of others.

Treasure it. Cherish it. Follow the simple instructions below, and pass it on to your grandchildren some day.

How to assemble your Nintendo Xmas Angel:

1. Stick this page on a sturdy piece of cardboard
2. Cut around the dotted lines
3. Jam it on top of your Christmas tree
4. Enjoy!